

THE POLITICS OF PRAYER  
Feminist Perspectives for Expanding Christian Prayer

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the School of Theology  
at Claremont

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
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May 1982

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*This dissertation, written by*

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to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of  
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the course of the development of the ideas presented here, members of many churches and participants in retreats, workshops, and lectures have triggered inspiration, contributed suggestions, shared experiences, and offered encouragement. I especially want to mention the clergywomen of the Pacific and Southwest Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and the ecumenical group of clergywomen in San Diego. Karen Scheib and Sister Marlene Brasefield have been special sisters in this effort.

I appreciate the members of the Mission Hills United Methodist Church for their assistance, but mostly their patience, as they knew that I worked on this project while I also ministered with them. I am grateful for the guidance of the faculty members on my committee: Howard Clinebell, Jr., John Cobb, Jr., Patricia Hodges, and Donald Rhoades. In addition, I appreciate the assistance of psychologist Patricia Lindquist, with whom I consulted in setting up the experimental prayer groups.

Carole Huntington, who typed the final copy, offered care, precision, and commitment. I am glad she shared in this project.

And, thanks to John, my husband, who was of invaluable assistance in reviewing each draft of this work.



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## ABSTRACT

Two of the ends which prayer helps to achieve are identification with the Deity and affiliation with the Deity. Prayer can do this in a psychologically healthful and theologically sound manner. Yet, given the fact that the prayer norm for Protestant Christianity has been discursive prayer to a male Deity who has been seen as having primarily transcendent power, it is the hypothesis of this dissertation that prayer has restricted the development of both women and men. Moreover, it has served to maintain the patriarchal aspects of religion, which in turn has reinforced the male dominance of our culture. Men have over-identified with the Deity, while women have been too dependent upon this masculine image of Deity and upon men.

Today women have special growth needs. Three important ones are to increase self-respect (which includes self-definition and a responsible use of power), to strengthen the wise use of our wills, and to become more courageous. This study argues that prayer can help meet these needs.

Prayer is defined as "conscious communication with Divinity." After critiquing the views of prayer provided by Barth and Schleiermacher, the author presents ideas from Tillich and process theologians. The concepts of mutual immanence and panentheism provide the means for integrating

the affiliation and identification functions.

The study shows how prayer can be expanded in two practical ways, through attention to diverse styles and through the use of different images for the Deity. The theologies of Tillich and process provide a logical basis for employing diverse styles and images in prayer. Styles of prayer which have been used throughout Christian history are here categorized into five major types: discursive, imagery, silence, repetitious words, and action. The various Divine images are differentiated as primarily masculine, primarily feminine, gender-full, and gender-free.

Included is an empirical study of two "Prayer Empowerment Groups," a control and one which was exposed to the expanded options. Questionnaires test the effects of using the expanded practices. The findings, while indicating a need for further research, demonstrate slight support for the hypothesis that benefits are to be found by using the expanded prayer options.

## INTRODUCTION

A woman in her mid-thirties came to talk with me about various problems which concerned her. She felt "out of touch with God" and had difficulty praying. She was a single parent and desired to find an appropriate man to marry, but she did not want to jump into marriage for any of the "wrong reasons." Her child and friends could come to her for help, but she felt that she had no one to go to and no way to express anger except in what she felt were inappropriate bursts of screaming. As we talked, since she had mentioned prayer, I commented, "I believe it is appropriate to think of God in different ways. God is what God is, but we can think of a variety of images to help us when we pray." I suggested that when she longed for companionship with a man, but could not immediately meet those needs for human friendship in a healthy way, she could at that point think of God as male and allow herself to feel "His" care as a Divine Companion. When she was praying for guidance regarding marriage, she might think of Divinity as a "Divine Couple," a male and female in interaction with one another. Then, she could draw upon the sense of guidance which an Infinite Couple might have to help her to be open, patient, and receptive. When she was angry with her son or took out her anger upon him, she could think of the Deity as Mother, someone who understood and appreciated the challenge

of being a mother. This woman deeply appreciated being told of these alternative images of Divinity. She felt prayer was again possible.

Another woman in her twenties had recently been pregnant with twin fetuses. Both were spontaneously aborted, well into her pregnancy. She experienced much grief and was determined to become pregnant again. When she commented that she prayed for a child, I mentioned to her that she might think of Divinity as a Goddess, or as a Mother. I shared my feeling of closeness with Divinity when I thought of Goddess, especially in conjunction with prayers associated with my body and its cycles. This woman was heartened by the potential of this image. How appropriate, she thought, to hold a feminine image for Deity in prayers regarding pregnancy.

These women discovered anew how vital prayer can be, and how it can be entered into in many emotional, mental and physical states. They were both active Christians and had recognized the importance of prayers in their religious lives, but having their old notions expanded made the experience of prayer personal and alive for them.

Today many Christians, particularly Protestants, face similar situations. They appreciate prayer and believe in its potential, but it does not have that spark that would allow it to become a persuasive and integral part of their lives. For them, the norm has been discursive prayer, that is, prayer that proceeds by reasoning and is something like



a conversation. And the object of the prayer has been a male God, understood as having transcendent power and usually referred to as "Father."

There are many styles of prayer besides discursive, and it is my belief that when these alternatives are used, prayer comes alive and enlivens the one who prays. We will see evidence for this in the case material which is presented in Chapter Five. When I speak of alternative styles of prayer, I refer to silence, the use of imagery, repetitious words, and what I am calling action prayer.

Silence is something other than carrying on a conversation with Divinity without using the vocal cords. One may attempt to release oneself from words, images, or thoughts, staying acutely alert to simply sitting in the Presence. Or, one may follow what is called "waiting silence." Here one is willing for words to emerge, but one waits until there is a strong call to speak.

The phrase "imagery prayer" is a way of referring to numerous potential uses of the faculty of the imagination in conjunction with prayer. We can use images in a simple fashion by seeing warm light around things, people, and situations about which we have concern or joy. Or, we can be far more structured, using various forms of guided imagery.

By prayer in "repetitious words, " I mean the repeating of a short phrase or word, again and again, either out loud or to oneself. This prayer style has been used

especially by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches.

"Action" prayer is the most difficult to define. It includes what I call "meditative and ritual action," "social action," and the "practicing the presence" model of Brother Lawrence.

Throughout this work, as we look at styles of prayer and images for Divinity and the theological undergirding for them, I point out two functions which I have observed prayer performs. These two functions I call "identification" and "affiliation" with Deity. These terms have meanings given to them from the literature of psychology, but whereas they have been used primarily for the interpersonal, I extend the usage to pertain to the interactions between humans and the Deity.

Identification is a term which was used by Sigmund Freud and is still used by psychotherapists such as Anna Freud, Erik Erikson, and those who follow Frederick Perls. Identification is the name of the process which occurs when one forms an emotional tie with another so that one behaves or reacts in ways which are like the other. In large measure, this takes place on an unconscious level. Identification is healthy and necessary as one grows up, yet it needs to be kept in balance with one's sense of uniqueness and identity as an individual who is separate from any other individual.

An individual's identifications can hinder one's development or enhance it. Sigmund Freud used the term

primarily in a pejorative sense, calling it a defense mechanism, a way the ego can defend itself. Anna Freud lifts up positive uses of identification, such as enabling the superego to develop in a healthy manner.<sup>1</sup>

Erik Erikson, in accord with his general tendency to see growth as purposeful, speaks of the process of identification in terms which show how this is a typical aspect of healthy personality development. He emphasizes that identifications are complex, picked up from diverse sources, and seldom complete. He sees adolescence as a time during which childhood identifications are resynthesized.<sup>2</sup> Both in healthy maturation and in good therapy, any of the morbid or excessive identifications are replaced with more desirable ones.<sup>3</sup> But these new identifications do not then define the person, for the individual is a "unique Gestalt which is more than the sum of its parts."<sup>4</sup> Frederick Perls worked to help release burdensome identifications. But, he, too, recognized their value in personality development. "All social solidarity depends on identifications with our intimates, our vocational roles, party, language, etc. They constitute the 'we' that enlarges the 'I.'"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Anna Freud, The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense (New York: International Universities Press, 1966) 119,144.

<sup>2</sup>Erik H. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis (New York: Norton, 1968) 156.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Frederick Perls, Ralph F. Hefferline, and Paul Goodman, Gestalt Therapy (New York: Dell, 1951) 122.

Perls argued that,

Like anything that is assimilated, identifications become unaware and they are healthy only if, should occasion arise, they can again be noticed and then be once more affirmed or else modified or discarded.<sup>6</sup>

I suggest that we need today to make ourselves aware of how we identify with the Deity, and in this process observe what modifications are needed in order to facilitate the healthiest and most ethical relationships between peoples and between ourselves and the Deity.

Affiliation is not a term which is used in a technical sense, as is identification. Yet virtually all psychotherapists agree that interactions, relations with others, are mandatory for the healthy development of the personality.

One's relationship to one's significant others plays an important role in the theories of Sigmund and Anna Freud. Erikson speaks of "significant relations," which become larger in number as the infant grows. By middle adulthood, Erikson believes, one's significant relations should include not only a spouse, but also the larger community, and by one's later years, if one develops as healthfully as possible, one senses affiliation with humankind. Schools of psychology which emerged after Freud criticized him for focusing too much upon the individual and her or his inner dynamics. Harry Stack Sullivan is one system builder who placed emphasis upon interpersonal behaviors as central to

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

personality development. Sullivan's view of relations included not only what occurs between two or more people, but also the relation one may have with imaginary people or ideals.<sup>7</sup>

To affiliate means to connect in close association, to bring into relationship. This is what we seek to do when we start our prayers with "Our Heavenly Father." For Freud, it is out of denial of reality and immaturity that we seek this affiliation. I suggest that affiliation with the Deity can be a sign of immaturity, but it also can offer assistance to healthy development.

If one accepts, as psychotherapists do, that identification and affiliation are two processes which are crucial to maturation, one might also be willing to grant that my hypothesis has some merit, that is, that these are processes which we can fulfill to some degree in prayer. And, if this is the case, we need to see whether we are doing this in a healthy, responsible manner.

We can judge the health or destructiveness of these processes in two ways. First, just as in psychotherapy, we can estimate the health to the individual and her or his environment. But a second norm is required when we refer to these processes as encountered in prayer. That norm is the test: how does the identification and affiliation conform

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<sup>7</sup>Robert A. Harper, Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959) 65.

to our understanding of the Deity to which we pray?

For Freud, there is no Deity; therefore belief in a Deity and attempts to communicate are seen as attempts at wish fulfillment. He believes one is merely seeking, in prayer, the intimacy and intensity of the "child's relation to his (sic) father."<sup>8</sup> In thinking of a Deity, he says "we disregard its relation to reality."<sup>9</sup> Freud argues: "Men cannot remain children forever; they must in the end go out into a 'hostile life.' We may call this 'education to reality.'"<sup>10</sup>

I argue from the basis of a belief in the reality of a Deity, but I suggest that we do injustice to that when we limit its name to something so masculine and hierarchical as a heavenly Father. I suggest that more accuracy in the naming of the Deity would encourage humans to grow up, so that we may become more responsible co-partners with Divinity.

It is my argument that the name or image we use for Deity (and, too, the style of prayer we use) greatly enhances or detracts from the ability of women and men to identify and affiliate with that Deity. I believe that we can have a healthy confidence in how we identify and affiliate with the Deity while at the same time we can have an appreciation of

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<sup>8</sup>Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion (New York: Doubleday, 1964) 27.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 81.

others who identify and affiliate with the Deity in other ways. Identification, I argue, can be strongest when there is likeness between self and the image for Deity, so that men have been able to identify with a male Father God.

Women have been unable to appropriately identify ourselves with the Deity using a male name for that Deity, and women have inappropriately cooperated with males in identifying males more closely with god. Women, on the other hand, have had a greater opportunity to affiliate in an intimate way with Deity, but this has been used to foster dependence upon males. Men have been short-changed in their fulfillment of proper affiliation with Divinity.

Identification with Deity is less acknowledged as a phenomenon in prayer than is affiliation, but I suggest that it is every bit as significant an element. It is not blasphemous to speak of identifying with Divinity in this way. I do not mean that we think that we are God, but rather that we seek to express, in our more limited capacities, qualities and attributes which we believe the Deity to have.

There are people who overly identify with a person, a concern, or an idea, so that they do not properly differentiate themselves from that other. Certainly there are delusional states in which one can equate oneself with the Deity. Also, there can be a neurotic over-dependence upon Divinity, so that one hardly moves unless one senses "God's will." Either of these functions can be met unhealthfully in

prayer. But unhealthy uses of identification and affiliation are also possible in one's interpersonal relations. It is the typical use of those functions that I am concerned about here. Typically, in our society, men are identified as little gods, seen as willing, reasonable, powerful people, with rights to these domains. Women are encouraged to affiliate with the "male God," to be dependent emotionally. In lifting up identification and affiliation for inspection, as they pertain to prayer, my intent is to observe what is already happening and to help to correct the imbalance in what already exists.

Identification and affiliation make sense whether one has a transcendent notion of the Deity or an immanent one, but I suggest that it is best understood with the panentheistic model, which includes both. If Deity is immanent, it is in and through the world, and one can sense the outpouring of this through oneself. Identification and affiliation are easily seen with a transcendent idea of Deity. This is the model used by most Christians throughout the ages. Panentheism enables both identification and affiliation with the Deity as an outpouring through oneself and as a power beyond oneself. The test of accuracy, as we understand the Deity in the Christian faith, seems more fulfilled with images for the Deity which suggest this panentheistic model.

In order to ascertain what is needed to meet our affiliative and identifying needs in a healthier way, we



must understand some dynamics of the present situation. In chapter one, entitled, "The Predicament of Women Today," I will look at three areas in which women are discovering we need focused attention. The first area is the domain of self-respect. Self-respect includes both a sense of one's own dignity and one's motivation to act responsibly. Self-respect requires the opportunity for self-definition, rather than the living out of one's life under someone else's definition of what one should be or do. Self-respect also requires the acceptance and wise use of one's internal power, drawing upon Divine power. Increasing our self-respect will require Divine images which support respect for women. A second area which needs attention by women today is the aspect of the psyche named the will. With a strong and healthy will, one is able to enter into relationships with an attitude of mutuality and respect. A third area is a quality which needs to be developed as we use our wills wisely in conjunction with beneficent power, that is, courage. Sensing the Spiritual Presence with us and within us engenders courage. As I discuss these three areas, self-respect, the wise use of the will, and courage, presented as needs by feminists, I will include some insights from Rollo May and Roberto Assagioli.

As self-respect is developed and all aspects of the psyche are developed and balanced, a primary goal of feminism can be achieved, that is, cooperation rather than competition. A discussion of this vision and some potential

sex differences regarding cooperation and competition are included in this first chapter.

The second chapter focuses upon the theological undergirding for prayer. First I suggest a definition of prayer: "conscious communication with Divinity." Following that, there is a presentation of discursive prayer, as it has often been understood from the perspective of Karl Barth, who believed that verbal prayer was the only appropriate style for a Christian. The theological points of Schleiermacher regarding prayer provide a radically different way of grasping what occurs. Then the theologies of Paul Tillich and process thought are presented as they relate to prayer. These two schools give ample justification and argumentation for the value of various styles of prayer and images of Divinity.

Chapter three offers guidelines for each of the styles of prayer which I am lifting up as viable from our tradition: silence, imagery, repetitious words, action, and discursive prayer.

The fourth chapter addresses the second way in which prayer can be expanded to better meet our identification and affiliation needs in prayer. This is the use of a variety of images for Divinity. The options which are provided are categorized as "primarily feminine" terms and images, "primarily masculine," "gender-full" (including both feminine and masculine elements), and "gender-free." There are examples from Judeo-Christian Scriptures, ancient

Goddess worship as well as contemporary witchcraft, devotion to Mary, developments from the prayer practice of individuals and religious orders, and some theoretical options.

The last chapter reports findings from a small empirical research study which sought to test the effects of expanded prayer styles and images of Divinity upon women and men who prayed.

If, after exploring the use of a variety of prayer styles and images for Divinity, one chooses to continue to pray as one has in the past, the choice to do that makes the prayer experience different, for it is no longer merely acting out of force of habit or doing what one believes one is told to do. The choice becomes a conscious decision among known alternatives.

There are those who have left the Christian church behind, generally for a somewhat amorphous personal faith which, whether they realize it or not, is still based upon Christian symbols and teachings, mixed with other elements. At the present time some people are coming back to churches, especially those who want their children to receive guidance they hope will be found in Sunday School. However, there are women and men who have intentionally left the Christian church because they find that it is at best unresponsive to the needs of today's people and at worst an agent of oppression. Christianity is sexist in its organization and symbol system. I agree that many denominations within Christianity are organized along hierarchical lines and that

current symbols are insensitive to all sorts of oppression. I respect those who seek religious alternatives to Christianity. I recognize, too, the courage it takes to seek to create worship forms and styles afresh, free from tradition.

However, I am persuaded from my experience that most people, when they experience spiritual longing, personal pain, and social injustice, turn to the major world religions for some form of guidance. The Judeo-Christian tradition is one which, when true to its major thrusts, teaches liberation from oppression, hope for the future, and love as the important primary quality in relationships.

Feminism affirms diversity. Even as it is appropriate and significant to look to the tradition of the Goddess and to reflect intensely in small groups, so too it is appropriate and mandatory to cleanse worship styles within Judaism and Christianity of their oppressive and limiting features.

But we need to know the possibilities which lie before us before we can practice them!

## CHAPTER 1

## THE PREDICAMENT OF WOMEN TODAY

Heretofore, men have had an advantage in meeting their identifying needs in prayer, as women have had an advantage in meeting our affiliative needs. Men have had the traditional symbol of a masculine Deity to buttress their affirmation of their own creative powers. It is difficult to imagine that such an all-pervasive symbol system does not empower males to act as if they had special god-given powers, in political and domestic spheres.

If it is believed, as it has been (at least for women), that affiliation with the opposite sex is essential for comfort and even for wholeness, then women have had an advantage in being able to relate to a male god. Leaning on the strength of "God" has been easier for women, for men have sought to emulate, not lean upon this strength. However, the advantage has only been with the very dependent or authoritative affiliative needs! Women have been encouraged to be dependent upon men and to look to men for authority, as we have been encouraged to turn to a male-imaged Divinity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It is interesting to pursue the question: "Why are there more women in churches?" It may be that affiliative needs require reassurance, again and again. Men may identify with God, then function as little gods in their

At this point in time women drastically need to develop other affiliative functions. We need more interdependency and independence in relationships, with other women, with men, and with Divinity. Women also need to be able to identify with the legitimacy of Divine power, as it moves through us. Expanding our terms and images for naming the Deity may facilitate this process.

Men, I believe, will benefit from the possibility of relating to Divinity in ways they have not been encouraged to do in the past, within the Christian tradition. Men may become more aware and tolerant of their dependency needs as they are enabled to be dependent in prayer by using a variety of Divine images.

This chapter focuses upon three "growing edges" for women today: the development and enhancement of self-respect, the wise use of our wills, and increased courage both to be and to act. The purpose of looking at these areas is to be better able to judge how prayer can help rather than hinder our growth.

I recognize that I speak primarily to people in a culture which enjoys a large measure of political freedom and who are often secure in terms of basic survival needs. However, I do believe that greater respect for women will aid the woman who must walk miles for fresh water, even as

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spheres of influence, believing themselves not to be in need of church, its authority, or its access to affiliation.

it aids the woman who can afford the time and cost of psychological counseling. Courage on the part of women leads to action for the assistance and development of better conditions for all women. Feminism seeks not to be exclusive but to be attentive to the needs of all women.

### SELF-RESPECT

Self-respect includes both regard for one's own dignity and the recognition of one's obligations and responsibilities. In order to feel dignity as women, we have to have the opportunity for self-definition. In order to take responsibility, we have to have a healthy sense of power. Self-definition and integrative power are two focal points upon which we need to reflect, if we are to gain self-respect.

Throughout the dominant intellectual history of the Western culture, women have been defined by males in psychological theories of personality development, theological and spiritual symbols and doctrines, and even in supposedly unbiased biological observations.

Most interpretations of the Biblical images of Adam and Eve see the male Adam as the norm and as male from the beginning, with Eve as an "other" with whom the male can relate as partner. This has been held to even though, as Biblical scholars are finally pointing out today, "Adam" is not considered "male," but simply "human" prior to the time that Eve is created, at which time Adam becomes male and

Eve, female.<sup>2</sup>

Freud and Jung are influential examples of scholars who looked at the male in order to arrive at a theory of personality development. Once the theory was achieved, then Freud and Jung looked to the female, to fit her development into their already established theories. This circuitous route of "definition" of the female does not provide us women with "self-definitions," but rather, it gives us definitions of ourselves based upon the male as norm, as seen by male theoreticians and therapists. Because of this, the natural identity which might develop between a little girl and her mother is seen by Freud as twisted by what he considered unavoidable jealousy, competition "for" the male, and satisfaction with the "lesser" identity of the female. Because of this definition of the female by the male, based first on his view of the male as norm, the female in Jung's system supposedly lives out of her unconscious dimension as she is reasoning or developing her spiritual functions!

A most revealing and often cited experiment by the Broverman studies indicates what is called the "double standard in mental health." It shows just how much the male is the "norm" in our society. For both male and female psychotherapists the criteria for judging certain kinds of behaviors as "healthy" differ for males and females, with the traits which make up the "male" criteria considered also

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<sup>2</sup>Leonard Swidler, Biblical Affirmations of Women (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979) 76.



the norm for the healthy "adult." The mentally healthy female was seen by the therapists, who were primarily analytically trained, as "passive, emotional, dependent, uncompetitive, non-objective, submissive and easily influenced."<sup>3</sup> It is clear that for those therapists who are charged with the responsibility of enabling clients to move toward healthier living, what is considered good for the adult and the male were the same, but the qualities for the female were different, and these were less highly valued. In fact, the characteristics considered female are indeed more natural to children. Even if a woman has an emerging self-image which is good, she may be dissuaded from developing that by a therapist who tries to make her conform to a limited role.

The male has been the norm not only in psychological theories of personality development, but also in the development of those psychological theories and religious practices which relate specifically to spiritual growth. Emma Jung lifted up what she said was in a "certain sense, perfect" as she described a woman's successful projection of her "animus" upon the male. By way of projection, a female finds direct access to "objective forms of the spirit" which it is supposedly difficult for her to obtain. "She finds it only through a man, who is her guide and intermediary." This relationship is "perfect" or "ideal" in the sense that there

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<sup>3</sup>Violet Franks and Vasanti Burtle (eds.) Women in Therapy (New York: Brunner, Mazel, 1974) 77; and Juanita H. Williams, Psychology of Women (New York: Norton, 1977) 339-344.

is no conflict. However, the woman remains unaware of many of her own dimensions.<sup>4</sup> Christian symbols of a masculine Deity and a male savior probably help to give rise to and to enhance such theories.

It is important to note that even theories regarding the physical development of females and males has been skewed, until the recent past. Now it is known that sexual identity begins with genetic and hormonal determinants. The father determines the sex of the child by his X or Y chromosome being given to the zygote. If the zygote is given an X from both parents, it develops into a female, whereas if it is given a Y from the father, then the embryonic gonad differentiates into a testis instead of an ovary, during about the seventh week after conception. For the differentiation of the male, something must be added, the Y chromosome. The fetus is equipped with the primordia of both male and female internal reproductive structures. Each sex, after differentiation takes place, retains left-over remnants of the other's physical structure. If there is no fetal testicular hormone secretion, then the differentiation of the internal reproductive system will be female. With the secretion, the fetus develops into a male.<sup>5</sup> These facts have led several researchers to conclude that

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<sup>4</sup>Jean Strouse (ed) Women and Analysis (New York: Grossman, 1974) 201.

<sup>5</sup>Williams, 90-99.

nature's basic form is female. Male development is a deviation from the basic female pattern. This is the reverse of the "Adam and Eve" imagery.<sup>6</sup>

Psychological, spiritual, and physical development have been seen predominantly through male definitions, which tended to see females as a divergent sub-species. Women have managed to have some good self-concepts, in the domains which have been granted to us as appropriate. Maccoby and Jacklin cite a number of experiments which entail reports of self-concept, and they conclude that "each sex does have a higher sense of self-worth in the area of more central ego involvement."<sup>7</sup> However, those areas are valued differently in our culture. Women may have a high sense of competence and self-valuing, but this is in an area which is defined by the culture to be less important. Virginia Woolf spoke of the differing values between women and men, saying, "Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. Speaking crudely, football and sport are 'important'; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes 'trivial.'"<sup>8</sup>

Women psychologists, women theologians, women biologists, women Biblical scholars, women writers, and

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 99.

<sup>7</sup>Eleanor Emmons Maccoby and Carol Nagy Jacklin, The Psychology of Sex Differences (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974) 160.

<sup>8</sup>Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929, 1957) 77-78.

women artists, along with women in numerous other disciplines, are beginning the much-delayed process of true "self-definition." This process is mandatory, as we gain appropriate self-respect.

As we develop self-respect, one critical concern, we have seen, is the opportunity for self-definition, the defining of women by women. In the variety of disciplines, this confronts the male-as-norm syndrome and sees the female afresh as female. Another pressing concern which affects women's self-respect is our sense of power.

Rollo May describes a variety of kinds of power: exploitative, manipulative, competitive, nutrient, and integrative. May did not specifically mention the quite different experiences with power between the female and the male. But his understanding of integrative power is helpful to grasp, for it is the kind of power we need today. Integrative power is power with another person. It is power of one individual cooperating with that of another.<sup>9</sup> May believes that power, and I assume that he means healthy, non-manipulative, non-exploitive power, is the birthright of every human.<sup>10</sup> It is the source of a person's self-esteem and the root of her or his conviction that she or he is interpersonally significant. It is therefore

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<sup>9</sup>Rollo May, Power and Innocence (New York: Dell, 1972) 106-109.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 243.

required if one is to be responsible.<sup>11</sup>

Jean Baker Miller, a psychiatrist, writes of her concern for the serious "inequality of power and authority between men and women."<sup>12</sup> For her, power is "the capacity to implement."<sup>13</sup> She is less interested, and believes other women are less interested, in power for itself or power over others than she is in establishing a basic core sense of autonomy for effective action. Yet women, Miller observes, are inexperienced with and fear power.

Women fear power in the more public arena and within the domestic environment in part because we have been taught to think that this will threaten men or appear to be an attack on men. Miller notes that many women have developed an "inner equation: the effective use of their own power means that they are wrong, even destructive."<sup>14</sup> Another reason women fear power, she says, is that we have experienced ourselves as victims. It is sometimes easier to continue to feel the victim than to struggle with making choices and acting for oneself. She argues that sometimes women stay in a cycle of self-condemnation rather than face the anger which we have toward those who have held power over us. Miller hopes that as women acquire real power

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976) 79.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 116.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 120.

which does not seek domination over others, the world may be different, for power can be used creatively and cooperatively, in the fashion May calls integrative. Women working with each other help to create a base from which women can learn to use power effectively without diminishing the power of other persons, especially other women.

However, Miller suggests that on the way toward the goal, one has to be willing to endure ambivalence and to face potential conflict.<sup>15</sup> The conflict which emerges is both inner and external, but it is required in order to achieve a more "authentic" and "autonomous" existence as well as better relationships with others. The ambivalence is due to the fact that many women carry the fear that developing autonomy, a healthy sense of one's own power, may entail the giving up of affiliations. Miller points out that "autonomy" does not carry that fearful connotation for men, and she believes that it does not need to for females. Women need to think of autonomy as including the ability to encompass relationships with others.<sup>16</sup> The goal is not necessarily simply "independence," for that may not prove to be satisfying in itself. The goal may be: "feeling effective and free along with feeling intense connections with other people."<sup>17</sup>

Author Virginia Woolf spoke forcefully years ago about one tangible change which facilitates a woman's sense

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 116-124.    <sup>16</sup>Ibid., 94-95.    <sup>17</sup>Ibid., 119.

of and acceptance of her own power: having an independent income. She wrote of woman's experience of no longer being dependent upon a man financially:

I need not hate any man; he cannot hurt me. I need not flatter any man; he has nothing to give me. So imperceptibly I found myself adopting a new attitude towards the other half of the human race...by degrees fear and bitterness modified themselves into pity and toleration; and then in a year or two, pity and toleration went, and the greatest release of all came, which is freedom to think of things in themselves. That building, for example, do I like it or not? Is that picture beautiful or not? Is that in my opinion a good book or a bad?<sup>18</sup>

Having true self-respect enables a woman to be autonomous, to experience her own power, to know her own opinions, to trust her definitions. Financial freedom may be a step toward achieving this self-respect, but there are certainly many women who do have the financial freedom, but who still are caught in psychological and spiritual dependency.

We are now realizing that we have a much more "direct access" to spirit than we have been told we had in the past. Many women are unwilling to experience power only through association with a man who has power, and this leads us to reflect upon how we relate to a male god, especially one who is considered to be powerful. Women are now asking how much we have projected our internal power not only onto men, but also onto a divine male.

It is essential to question whether Christianity is enabling women to experience our self-respect or whether it

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<sup>18</sup> Woolf, 38-39.

is encouraging us to turn toward males and to a male god for our definition and external authority.

Integrative power is the most mature model of power to use in order to conceive of the relationship between the Deity and the one who prays.<sup>19</sup> I believe it is also the most accurate, theologically. During some periods of stress, in the midst of some problems, some personality types will appreciate nutrient and even competitive power images in relation to Divinity, for this may engender both strength and hope. However, these images of power by the Deity can lead to a neurotic dependency or simply to a lack of maturity in the spiritual dimension. It is frightening to realize that most of our liturgical language, including traditional prayers and numerous hymns, assumes primarily exploitative, manipulative, competitive, and nutrient power, but very little integrative power between humans and Divinity.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Process theology, with its emphasis upon God's power as persuasive and beneficent, is constructive at this point.

<sup>20</sup>For example, "Make Me a Captive, Lord," a hymn in the United Methodist Hymnal, states: "Make me a captive, Lord, And then I shall be free; Force me to render up my sword, And I shall conqueror be...Imprison me within thine arms, And strong shall be my hand. My heart is weak and poor Until its master find; It has no spring of action sure, It varies with the wind. It cannot freely move Till thou has wrought its chain; Enslave it with thy matchless love, and deathless it shall reign. My power is faith and low Till I have learned to serve...My will is not my own Till thou has made it thine..." This hymn includes phrases which show power as competition, force, exploitation, and nurturance ("within thine arms"). I know its attempt is to aim toward aligning our action with Divinity's power. But it is difficult to feel that integrative power amidst the other



Jungian Ann Belford Ulanov speaks of an important function of the religious symbol, that of

making perceptible and accessible to consciousness the power and meaning of the ultimate realities to which it points and of objectifying the psyche's total conscious and unconscious relationships to whose realities.<sup>21</sup>

If the symbol evokes and reinforces oppressive concepts of self-definition and power, affecting our self-respect in detrimental ways, then the symbol needs to be scrutinized carefully and probably needs to be altered.<sup>22</sup>

#### THE WISE USE OF OUR WILLS

In the past, Christian piety has often leaned too heavily upon the development of "will power," to do what is right or to refrain from doing wrong. Guilt and inertia were at times induced without serving any appropriate useful function, as a person wrestled with her or his own will as "opposed" to "God's will." Presently, male psychologists such as Rollo May, male theologians such as John Cobb, and feminist theologians who stress the value of the Goddess

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images of power.

<sup>21</sup>Ann Belford Ulanov, The Feminine (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971) 314-315.

<sup>22</sup>Stanton, writing in 1898, believed that the Bible not only continued the suppression of women in our society, but also was an important factor in shaping a low self-image within women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Women's Bible (Seattle: Coalition Task Force of Women and Religion, 1898, 1974); and Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson (eds.) Women and Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 216.

image propose that we need to be more attentive to the willing dimension of our psyche. The feminists point out that it is especially women who suffer from the underdeveloped will.

The human psyche holds potential for imagery, intuition, reason, will, feeling, and self-transcendence.<sup>23</sup> Each of these needs to be developed, by both females and males. Because we have had some ambivalence and barriers with respect to power, the will may be one aspect of the psyche women have especially neglected.

Submitting one's will to the will of Divinity can be oppressive if there is a set authority, such as the church, a group, or a person which interprets precisely what that Divine will is supposed to be. However, if one is starting from a base of self-respect, then willing becomes an action based on one's faith that one can discern what is best to will (with various aids such as grasping intuition, interpreting dreams, understanding tradition, turning to resources, Scripture, and friends, using reason, and prayer).

Rollo May gives considerable attention to the use of the will. He analyzes the decision-making process, speaking of it in three stages, from wish, through will, to decision. He makes some connections between this process

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<sup>23</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr., "Strengthening the Spirit," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXX (Winter-Summer 1975) 130-39.

and the movement from an impulse in the "id," evaluated and given commitment by the "superego," and acted upon by the "ego." Wish offers warmth, content, imagination, freshness, and richness to will. Wish does not imply that a choice is made; it is a tentative playing with ideas and does not even require consciousness of the self as it gives self-direction, protection, and maturity to wish.<sup>24</sup> May sees decision as a distinct form of consciousness, separate from wish or will. It develops in the person who is moving toward action. It is the taking of responsibility.<sup>25</sup> We might say decision is will linked to power.

A married woman who works part time in an office has several children, does all the domestic functions at home (cooking, cleaning, entertaining), and is involved actively in her church and community may "wish" she had more help around the house. She may fantasize that her growing children will take greater care to clean up. She may dream about her husband's greater involvement in the domestic responsibilities. If the woman begins to will that this help be forthcoming, she may pray for guidance as to how to express her desires. She may begin to make acute observations of her family members, gathering insight into the way chores are taken care of compared to the way she would

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<sup>24</sup>Rollo May, Love and Will (New York: Norton, 1969) 218.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 267.

see them more justly divided. Once she decides, she acts; she speaks up. She makes her will known. The more her will comes from a healthy self-respect and a sense of internal power, the more likely her comments will be taken seriously by herself and her family members.

Another woman may use her will to say "no" to a request made upon her which she simply cannot afford to say "yes" to, if she faces her limitations honestly. She spares herself guilt only if she has self-respect which is intact. If she functions out of low self-respect, with a definition given to her by others, she may still use her will to say, "no," but she is likely to feel guilty nevertheless, thereby draining her energy and power even more.

Will is often presented as an inhibitor. Certainly will does inhibit (that is, to not eat too much, to not misbehave), but the will that is needed by women today is most frequently the will to express opinions, the will to act, the will to be and to become. The will that is needed the most is the will which motivates, rather than inhibits.

Maccoby and Jacklin offer a hypothesis, after citing various experiments:

women defend their egos through dissociation--lack of commitment. They seem less likely to say "I believe" or "I want," and more likely to attribute ideas to others and say "wouldn't you like to..." If an idea or proposal proves unpopular, then the initiator is in a position to dissociate herself from it. We have seen no solid evidence, however, on whether this is actually a form of self-protection more often used by women than men, so it remains a hypothesis.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Maccoby and Jacklin, 160.

Many who worship the Goddess place a strong emphasis upon the development of the will. They make a connecting link between the power and will of the female Deity and their own capacity to will. This topic is further developed in chapter four.

Robert Assagioli, the founder of Psychosynthesis, gives, like Rollo May, considerable attention to the development of the will. These views are collected in his book, The Act of Will, but they are prevalent in his other writings as well. He described the discovery of will in terms which many women today might echo with joy.

The discovery of the will in oneself, and even more the realization that the self and the will are intimately connected, may come as a real revelation which can change, often radically, a man's (sic) (27) self-awareness and his whole attitude toward himself, other people, and the world. He perceives that he is a 'living subject' endowed with the power to choose, to relate, to bring about changes in his own personality, in others, in circumstances. This enhanced awareness, this 'awakening' and vision of new, unlimited potentialities for inner expansion and outer action, gives a new feeling of confidence, security, joy--a sense of 'wholeness.'<sup>28</sup>

Biological, environmental, cultural and political factors may inhibit active willing, because the one who wills does not see any impact being made as a result of her or his choices. Psychosynthesis suffers from some naive optimism

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<sup>27</sup>I note "sic" after the first masculine term in a quote, to remind the reader of the unconscious identification of the male as norm, both for humanity or for Divinity.

<sup>28</sup>Robert Assagioli, The Act of Will (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973) 9.

which is endemic to psychological and religious groups which expect "unlimited potentialities" without adequate attention to social, cultural, and institutional limitations. Rollo May, who faced biological limits early in his life, has been more cautious about proclaiming potentials. He calls the statement "human possibilities are unlimited" "de-energizing." He says it can actually cause terror in the listener.

It is like putting someone into a canoe and pushing him (sic) out into the Atlantic toward England with the cheery comment, 'The sky's the limit.' The canoer is only too aware of the fact that an inescapable real limit is also the bottom of the ocean.<sup>29</sup>

As women grow in our ability to will, and as we do so in conjunction with prayer, it is wise to recognize that certain limits (physical, historical, metaphysical) are given. Some may be altered. Some so-called "givens" may not be so stable upon redefinition, but some limits do at last remain. It would be futile and exhausting to act in life as if no limits were present. Many women who are taking on numerous roles at the same time are discovering that we reach finite limits of time and energy. We must learn to will to stop, too.

It is my contention that prayer in its various styles can aid (or retard) the development and integration of wish, will, and decision. Imagery, discursive, and

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<sup>29</sup>Rollo May, The Courage to Create (New York: Bantam Books, 1975) 134.

silent prayer may foster the emergence of wish. Imagery prayer and verbal asking, explained in the next chapter, may be styles in which will predominates. Decision for action may be reached in some forms of discursive prayer which lead to commitment, and it is certainly present in all forms of what I call action prayer. It is important to consider the style and content of prayer, to see how they enhance one's will and decision-making.

### COURAGE

Self-respect which is based upon one's own self-definition and made responsible by power used in an integrative way is required of women today. The aspect of the psyche which seems to be in greatest need of development is the will. A quality which we find we need desperately as we grow into our self-definitions and act responsibly is courage.

Maccoby and Jacklin, in their book on sex differences, and Judith Bardwick, in her Psychology of Women, discuss women's fear of success.<sup>30</sup>

Both men and women describing people who succeed in academic settings, depict painful and embarrassing things happening to successful women, good things happening to successful men.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Maccoby and Jacklin, 135,138, 140-141.

<sup>31</sup>Maccoby and Jacklin, 151, citing L. Monahan, et al. "Intrapsychic versus cultural explanations of the fear of success motive." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, XXIX (1974) 60-64.

Whole dissertations are being written on this topic, for women in many disciplines are becoming acutely aware of remnants of resistance to achieve what we are called to do as best we can. Experiments show that this is not limited to professional women. Girls tend to underestimate their own intellectual abilities more than boys do. This may be an earlier indication of the same fear.

Ann Belford Ulanov insightfully remarks:

much of the philosophical theology claims that man (sic) is afraid of nonbeing, of the nothingness of life. The fear is just the opposite, I think. Man is afraid of an avalanche of being--there is so much there and so much of it is accessible to him...<sup>32</sup>

Women today are in need of courage as we face our fears of doing and being that which we are not sure is true to our natures. We may fear challenging the status quo and the continuity of our relationships. It takes courage to be women, individuals, with finite, limited, but oh so large potentialities! When we consider relating to Divinity in heretofore unknown ways, we see even more potentials, but this, too, takes courage.

Paul Tillich names courage as that which is needed to face various kinds of death, meaninglessness, and condemnation. As we risk growing into self-respect, with responsible action, we face condemnation, not only by men and other women, but also by our own inner gnawing guilt pangs and uncertainties. To affirm our being and the

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<sup>32</sup>Ulanov, 323.



legitimacy of our being in spite of elements within and around us which conflict with our sense of self-respect takes courage in large doses.

Mary Daly, in her most recent book, Gyn/Ecology, criticizes Tillich's notion of courage as not sufficiently alert to the particular emphasis needed by women today, that is, the courage to take responsibility for our own processes.<sup>33</sup> It appears to me that Tillich's courage is needed even if one does not act in any particularly bold way. Simply living, finding a place to fit, and giving purpose to one's life requires Tillich's existential courage. However, when one frequently bucks up against the way things have been, faces, meets, and climbs over barriers, the courage which Daly describes seems appropriate: the "Courage to Blaspheme."<sup>34</sup> She means by that the ability to say from the heart and head what one experiences, regardless of institutional and historical and cultural implications.

The courage to pray, using names, symbols, and images which have been suppressed for hundreds of years may seem to require "the courage to blaspheme." However, I would not see what takes place as real blasphemy. Images such as Lord, King, and Father, which hide or inhibit the experience of Divinity do as much or more to blaspheme

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<sup>33</sup>Mary Daly, GYN/ECOLOGY (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) 377.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 264.

Divinity itself than images which have been used less frequently, but do reveal the touch of the Spirit, the Closeness of Being.

It is illuminating to compare the courage needed by women today with the courage which Rollo May described in his work, The Courage to Create. He spoke primarily of the creation of the artist, whereas we speak today of creating fresh ideas, theories, and images. Nevertheless, we are engaged in what he defines as "creativity," "the process of bringing something new into being."<sup>35</sup> "the encounter of the intensely conscious human being with his or her world."<sup>36</sup> May explains that the artist, poet, or saint fights the actual gods of our society, that is, the gods of conformity, apathy, material success, and exploitative power.<sup>37</sup> When we begin creating more significant ways of speaking of the Deity, we find that in prayer we can indeed be enabled to confront courageously the "actual gods," but the resistance we face, within and without, may be enormous. May points out that creative courage involves a "curious paradox." One must be fully committed and aware that one might be wrong!<sup>38</sup> There is conviction and doubt; commitment in spite of doubt.<sup>39</sup> This paradox helps to describe our predicament today.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>May, Courage, 37.    <sup>36</sup>Ibid., 56.    <sup>37</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 2.    <sup>39</sup>Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>40</sup>May discusses various types of courage. Courage of the body enables one to cultivate sensitivity, to listen,

Recently there has developed a stream of thought in the speeches and writings of feminists regarding the exhaustion of the "superwoman." True feminism, which is difficult to live out until institutions and structures become more malleable, affirms the discovery of what one wants and is good at doing. Feminism supports the coordination of those wants and talents in a constructive way with those to whom we relate intimately, in a fashion which is responsible and satisfying to all involved. We, as a culture and as individuals, are likely to make many mistakes. To be committed to the process of creativity in spite of sidetracks takes a radical courage indeed. Rollo May reminds the creative person, and I suggest to the person in creative process, that there is a "curiously sharp sense of joy" when one finds the form just right for one's creation. This joy, as well as the commitment, make the anxiety, self-doubt, and despair worth enduring, or so we courageously affirm.

#### COOPERATION

I am convinced that it is of no value to persuade or enable individuals to live to their potentials, emotionally,

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to value the body "as the means of empathy with others." Moral courage could be labeled perceptual courage, for it is dependent upon one's ability to perceive suffering--in one's self or others. Social courage enables one to invest in a relationship over a long period of time, so it involves greater and greater openness. Finally, creative courage is the courage to discover "new forms, new symbols, new patterns on which a new society can be built." May, Courage, 6-14.

intellectually, spiritually, or physically, unless the reason for individual development is to enhance the building up of cooperation in our society as a whole. Individual "success" or "fulfillment" is neither satisfying nor meaningful in the deepest sense unless we work alongside others, not above others. I am struck how some people describe the significance of their job by how many people they "supervise" or are "over." To cooperate "with" a dozen people would take more maturity and ability than to be "over" these twelve.

Again and again feminists present the vision of cooperation rather than competition, from the domestic scale to that of international relations. There are those who, like Jung and Erikson, encourage women to teach society the values which are supposedly inherent in us, values like cooperation and nurturance. Most feminists do not believe that those values are more inherent in women. But, we recognize that women have been "carriers" of these values, for society. Women and men, each enabled by self-respect, need to take responsibility for our own parts in seeking the vision of cooperation.

We have not yet lived in a situation in which women define ourselves, men themselves, and the relationship between the two emerges out of mutual interest and respect. This condition is required before we can know how possible cooperation and mutual enhancement may be.

There have been many observations and theories

about the relationship between women and men. Karen Horney, who challenged many of Sigmund Freud's ideas, wrote in the 1930's of the "distrust between the sexes."<sup>41</sup> She also posited a novel idea for psychoanalysts at that time: there might be a healthy inner attraction between the sexes!<sup>42</sup> Lederer has treaded through history, pointing out evidence of the fear that men have of women.<sup>43</sup> Juanita Williams discusses the tendency of men to draw the conclusion, or to assume, that women cannot be understood. She believes men do not try to understand, for if they stay ignorant, they do not have to fully recognize their relationship of dominion over women.<sup>44</sup>

Lederer proposes that cooperation is more natural for men, because in early history, when hunting began, men were forced to cooperate, while women, he says, were left to their familial pursuits.<sup>45</sup> Miller makes virtually the opposite point, saying that women in families have consistently had to work out cooperative systems, but that men are likely to see cooperation as somehow implying a loss for themselves.<sup>46</sup> I am persuaded to see the situation as a bit

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<sup>41</sup>Karen Horney, Feminine Psychology (New York: Norton, 1967) 108.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 61,125.

<sup>43</sup>Wolfgang Lederer, The Fear of Woman (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968).

<sup>44</sup>Williams, 7.

<sup>45</sup>Lederer, 88.

<sup>46</sup>Miller, 42.

more complex. I am impressed with the research conclusions of Maccoby and Jacklin, that males are possibly both more competitive and more cooperative. This is explained by seeing that competition involves cooperation at times. For example, to compete in business or in football requires at the same time cooperation with some "team."

Maccoby and Jacklin arrive at their conclusions after looking at several studies. There is some evidence that boys' achievement motivation is sustained or even stimulated by competitive conditions. Girls, however, become less motivated with competition. Boys are more influenced by peer presence and peer action, but neither sex is more or less influenced by the presence or action of adults.<sup>47</sup> It is important to realize that these results show only what is the case now, not what might be seen with different acculturation. And differences between the sexes seem to diminish with age.<sup>48</sup> As women and men become older, women become more tolerant of our aggressiveness and impulsiveness and men become more tolerant of their nurturant and affiliative impulses.

Maccoby and Jacklin suggest that we, as a culture, should minimize rather than maximize sexual differences. They argue that we should moderate male aggression, for

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<sup>47</sup>Maccoby and Jacklin, 147.

<sup>48</sup>Williams, 380.

example, rather than prepare females to submit to it.<sup>49</sup> And we should encourage males to develop their ability to nurture.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps when our styles of organization and our roles become more diverse, we will evoke from women and men alike qualities which will enable better cooperation. This development would not be congruous with a male Deity who is seen as ruling in an all-powerful manner. Many images may be necessary in order to evoke individual experiences of the Spiritual Presence. A variety of styles of power and relationships in the symbol of Divinity itself (e.g., Divine Couple or a sexually inclusive Trinity) could aid the movement toward more equality, justice and cooperation between humans.

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<sup>49</sup>That males are more aggressive than females is one of the four "well-established" sex differences. The other three are girls' excelling in verbal ability and boys excelling in math and spatial ability. Maccoby and Jacklin, 228.

<sup>50</sup>Maccoby and Jacklin, 374.

## CHAPTER 2

## THEOLOGIES OF PRAYER

## DEFINITION OF PRAYER

The definition of prayer which I use is: "conscious communication with Divinity." The basic word in the definition is "communication." There are three possibilities for thinking about the direction of communication with Divinity: communication from the one who prays to the One to whom she or he prays, guidance from the Deity to the one who prays, and a two-way movement between Divinity and the person who prays. Barth's concept of prayer clearly fits into the first category, Schleiermacher's into the second, and both process thought and Tillich, into the third category.

Communication is primarily an affiliative function if we think of communication as discursive talking. I am convinced that a major reason Christians have relied so heavily upon discursive prayer is that it gives a strong feeling of being with an "Other." However, I adamantly refuse to limit "communication" to that usage. Communication takes place through actions such as coordinated teamwork, in which no words are needed. Daydreaming with a loved one uses imagery. Imagery prayer may be seen as focused daydreaming, with a loved and Loving One. I am aware when I



visit a woman in the hospital who is conscious, but cannot even move her lips to try to form words, that we are communicating. In the silence there is at least an awareness of the other's presence and probably a sense of caring. Communication is simply an avenue through which there is an exchange and sharing. A fetus and mother communicate on many nonverbal levels, sharing their very lives. Communication does not require separation or transcendence of one over the other. It can occur in, around, and through the multiple points of contact. The mother and fetus image is appropriate for the panentheistic option, the Deity being both in the depths, yet beyond and providing life. A transcending "Father" may be a useful image at times, but it is not the only viable metaphor for Divinity.

I have modified the word "communication" with the adjective "conscious" because I want to be clear that we know when we pray. I personally believe that we are in touch with Divinity and that communication takes place at all times, but that unconscious level of interaction is not prayer. When one becomes aware of one's thoughts of Divinity, or experience of Divinity, even if one does not intend to think of or experience Divinity, then that becomes conscious communication, and it becomes prayer.

I find it necessary to include "Divinity" in the definition of prayer, for I am not speaking of an activity which is purely psychological, that is, a talking to oneself or pep-talk.

At first I used the word "God" in the definition of prayer, but now I cannot. It is definitely a masculine word, regardless of the fact that few of us consciously think of it as such. If we use the word, "Goddess," we immediately realize that it is in contrast to "God." To consistently speak of the One to Whom we pray as Goddess would reinforce the feminine imagery. Likewise, to use the name "God" reinforces the masculine imagery.<sup>1</sup>

### DISCURSIVE PRAYER

#### KARL BARTH, A PROPONENT

If a Christian were asked to lead a prayer at a family gathering, before a meal, one could be rather certain that she or he would start talking. When we pray in worship services, virtually 98 percent of the time there is talking out loud, and if there is silent time, there is sure to be much "talking" at a subvocal level going on in the minds of the members of the congregation and the minister. Discursive prayer proceeds in a conversational manner, following the reasoning of the one speaking. It can be a few words, "Help me," or it can contain many many words. It can be written,

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<sup>1</sup>As I relate the theologies of Barth, Schleiermacher, Tillich, and process thought throughout this chapter, I will use the term "God," because these men used it so very often, and it is hard to convey their views without this term. In the other chapters of this word I do not use "God," but rather "Divinity" or "the Deity," or an other gender-free name, unless I am referring to a discussion with someone in which I have used or would use "God." Even in this chapter, however, I never use a pronoun for "God" which all of these theologians do use, namely, "He."

as for liturgies, on spontaneous, fresh for the occasion. Sometimes when I have spoken on the topic, "Five Types of Prayer," someone would comment that she expected me to speak upon the famous five types, all of which were expected to be discursive: adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving. Actually, although these are usually discussed in conjunction with discursive prayer, there are elements of these five attitudes in the other styles of prayer, too.

Karl Barth is an outstanding example of a relatively recent theologian who emphasizes discursive prayer. He stresses the transcending God and the radical difference between God and humans. I see in Barth a theology which consciously affirms the meeting of affiliative needs in prayer, but unconsciously does all it can to identify God with males and masculinity. There is practically no way a woman could meet her identifying needs if she prayed in a Barthian fashion. It is no accident that Barth held his strong views regarding the otherness of God, the verbalness of prayer, and the rigid roles of women and men, roles which limit and oppress women.

Barth understands prayer as communication which takes place in the direction from humans to God. He makes a distinction between what he calls explicit and implicit prayer. Implicit prayer is a "perennial undertone" which upholds all other human actions.<sup>2</sup> It is a continuous attitude of the

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<sup>2</sup>Karl Barth Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1961) III/4, 89.

heart and mind. His idea of implicit prayer does not fit into my definition, which requires that prayer be a conscious activity. If there is a definite attention to thinking of God while one is engaged in other activities, in the style which will be described in chapter three as "practicing the presence," then that would be prayer. But Barth seems to refer to an unconscious "undertone"; therefore, it cannot be considered prayer according to my definition. Although implicit prayer is important to Barth, he spends virtually all of his short sections which speak of prayer explaining the type he calls "explicit."

He is very precise as to how to pray "explicitly." There are five criteria. The first is based upon the fact that humans have freedom before God. God has given us permission to pray, and because this permission is given by God, it becomes, for Barth, automatically a command and order.<sup>3</sup> In a small book on prayer, his commentary to Romans and in the section of the Church Dogmatics which contains the greatest amount of reflection upon prayer, Barth reiterates that God wills that we should pray and that prayer is required of us precisely because we are given the power to perform it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III/4, 91-93.

<sup>4</sup>Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) 458; Karl Barth, Prayer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946) 20, 29; and Barth Church Dogmatics, III/4, 76.

Barth notes that need does not drive us to prayer; it does not teach us to pray. Need leads some to be anxious, to be defiant, to work zealously, to beg, or to resign themselves to their misfortune. Only the command to pray, given by God with gracious love, teaches us and leads us actually to perform the act.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, with my hypothesis that we pray out of two basic needs, I do not fully agree with Barth here. However, I do agree that we frequently seek to meet the affiliative and identifying needs in many other ways than in prayer, and certainly we must. Prayer does not sufficiently meet either of these needs. It is one of various resources.

The second of Barth's criteria of true prayer is that it be petition--sheer asking, via discursive prayer.<sup>6</sup> Petitionary prayer is not one type of prayer alongside other types. For the Christian, it is the only suggested style.<sup>7</sup> We are to ask frankly, declaring our needs in a free, glad and bold fashion.<sup>8</sup> Barth suggests that we might ask for strength, courage, serenity, prudence, how to obey the law, how to continue to believe, or how to renew our faith.<sup>9</sup> Barth insists that prayer is just asking primarily because he maintains that we are free before God. We come with

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<sup>5</sup>Barth, Church Dogmatics, III/4,91-92.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., III/4,97 and III/3, 282-268,271,281.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., III/4,97.      <sup>8</sup>Ibid., III/4, 102.

<sup>9</sup>Barth, Prayer, 19.

empty hands; we are not required to "give" to God when we pray. We are dependent upon God, and it is a joyous freedom and responsibility to accept that dependency through making use of it, by asking for what we need.<sup>10</sup> Barth acknowledges that thanksgiving, repentance and worship are all elements of petitionary prayer. We thank God by doing what God has commanded--to ask. We repent, confess our unworthiness before the greatness of God, simply by doing imperfectly what God commands of us--to ask.<sup>11</sup>

The Lord's Prayer is the chief model upon which we should base our prayers, and of course it is discursive. Barth breaks down this prayer into an invocation, six petitions, a doxology and the Amen.

Barth does not want Christians to be concerned about praying correctly, with the right words. But, he is quite clear that the correct way to pray is with words. One may use sighs, but not silence, unless that silence is understood as subvocal speech.<sup>12</sup> His rigidity is seen in a comment about the "silent prayer" of Quakers:

They say that it is beautiful, and in any case necessary for the soul's health, for a churchful of men (sic) to keep communal silence for five minutes. It can also be found embarrassing, but has it any spiritual meaning? Can it be established and justified theologically? Is it not repugnant to the nature of divine service as an assembly of the community, in which prayer ought not to be a private matter but common and therefore in some way

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<sup>10</sup>Barth, Church Dogmatics, III/4,97-8.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., III/4,99-100. <sup>12</sup>Ibid., III/4,89-90,111.

vocal? And does it not lead us to the idea of wordless prayer, which as a whole and exceptions apart cannot be regarded as true prayer.<sup>13</sup>

I propose that Christians consider five styles of prayer: discursive, silence, imagery, repetitious words, and action. Barth is strongly opposed to the use of these: silence, repetitious words, and imagery. (He does not mention action as prayer.) We have seen his words on silence. He calls some of the Roman Catholic prayer, the repeating of phrases, "repetitious 'mumbling.'"<sup>14</sup> He disregards the imagery work of Ignatius of Loyola, whose teachings we will review, as "psychological hygiene."<sup>15</sup> Prayer is quite simply to ask God for what we want, period. That requires petition and words, spoken or subvocalized.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., III/4, 112.

<sup>14</sup>Barth, Prayer, 27-28.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., III/4, 97-98: But if by devotion we mean an exercise in the cultivation of the soul or spirit, i.e., the attempt to intensify and deepen ourselves, to purify and cleanse ourselves inwardly, to attain clarity and self-control, and finally to set ourselves on good footing and with agreement with the Deity by this preparation, then it is high time we realized that not merely have we not even begun to pray or prepare ourselves for prayer, but that we have actually turned away from what is commanded us as prayer. This type of exercise, as evolved and prescribed by Ignatius Loyola for his peoples and as variously recommended in modern-secular religion, can perform a useful function as a means of psychological hygiene, but it has nothing whatever to do with the prayer required of us. Prayer begins where this kind of exercise leaves off; and this exercise must leave off where the prayer begins in which neither the collected man nor the distraught, neither the deepened nor the superficial, neither the purified and cleansed nor the impure, and not even the clear and strong, has anything whatever to represent or offer to God, but everything to ask of Him.

The third criterion for true explicit prayer is that the asking be that of the ontological "we."<sup>16</sup> Prayer supposedly cannot estrange us from anyone. It can only unite us.<sup>17</sup> The "we" is not only those in communion with Jesus Christ, but also the entire community--indeed, all persons. Barth calls attention to the fact that Jesus prayed for the community<sup>18</sup> and points out that the plural is used in the Lord's Prayer no less than eight times.<sup>19</sup> One function of the plural sense of prayer is to take away the egotistic character of personal desires.<sup>20</sup> I would suggest that the sense of "we" in one's prayer may lead one to check some of one's askings, for one would be made more aware of the greater good of the world community. However, Barth does not speak to this reflective function of prayer, primarily because he holds to the notion that God will cleanse the prayer of selfishness. Barth does not consider prayer itself a place where self-transcendence should be developed.

Barth does not believe that God gives us that for which we ask, but rather that God gives our request a place in God's plan and will. Barth stands firmly for the immutability of God and consequently for true foreordination.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., III/4,102.

<sup>17</sup>Barth, Prayer, 19.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., III/3,281.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., III/4,102

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., III/4,103.



Tillich and process theologians resolve this same problem by affirming God's responsiveness to humans rather than the immutability of God. But Barth leaves some ambiguity in his resolution. He retains the view that God is immutable. However, he affirms that God is a living God; therefore, God changes God's intentions based upon our prayer. Somehow prayer exerts an influence upon God's action, and even upon God's existence.<sup>21</sup>

Barth does not deal with the question of how clearly God's actions based upon our prayers look like the answers for which we have prayed. He leaves room for discrepancy between the answer and the request by noting that God cleanses our prayers and that God uses God's wisdom to bring the corresponding response. God will "in His (sic) wisdom give him (the person who prays) what he needs."<sup>22</sup>

The fourth criterion is that every prayer is certain of being heard. This requires a brief explanation of Barth's understanding of the involvement of the Trinity in prayer. According to this theologian, God became a man who has, in taking our side, become our brother. Jesus Christ functions between us and God. Jesus Christ is necessary to God to answer our prayers, in spite of (or because of) our unworthiness.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., III/4,106,109 and Barth, Prayer, 21.

<sup>22</sup>Barth, Church Dogmatics, II/510.

<sup>23</sup>Barth, Prayer, 26.

It is He--Jesus Christ through the Spirit, the Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ--who makes good that which we of ourselves cannot make good, who brings our prayer before God and therefore makes it possible as prayer...<sup>24</sup>

Jesus acts as a mediator and intercessor between us and God. The brother image is seen again in that Jesus Christ "takes us with him in order to associate us with himself."<sup>25</sup> A similar role is played by Mary in many Roman Catholic prayers.

God cleanses our prayers, Jesus Christ acts as mediator, yet it is indeed the Holy Spirit which enables us to pray, according to Barth.<sup>26</sup> The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ work together as mediator-intercessor in the cleansing process. Because the Trinity functions with us in mind, what we pray for need not be censored by us as egoistic or shortsighted, stupid or unreasonable. Barth does not deny that these factors enter into our requests. He acknowledges this and states that because our asking is so unique, being an asking made to God according to God's command and because Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit intercede, we need not be concerned about what we ask for or how we ask. If we are wrong, God accepts our prayer as it stands and gives to it the pure and holy form, "the ordered and cleansed meaning, which it did not have in our hearts

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<sup>24</sup>Barth, Church Dogmatics, III/4,94.

<sup>25</sup>Barth, Prayer, 33.

<sup>26</sup>Barth, Church Dogmatics, III/4,94.

and mouths."<sup>27</sup> Barth does not comment upon the cultural influences of egotistic or potentially oppressive public prayers, which I believe function to reinforce personal and cultural values which are limiting or wrong, regardless of the effect upon God. One reason that Barth is not interested in this is that he does not want prayer to be said for its effect upon other people, but rather entirely for its address to God alone. Even though I agree that prayer should be spoken in public primarily as prayer to God, not to the people who are gathered, I must recognize that the prayer does set an example for the people.

The fifth and last criterion for prayer relates to "the form of prayer in ethics."<sup>28</sup> This criterion is quite a bit less precise than the preceeding four, reiterating the previous points and speaking to the question of regularity in prayer.

Barth has expressed clear views about what prayer should be. Above all, it should be an asking in response to God's permission to pray, and it should be discursive. It is done with an awareness of the community and for the purpose of the community under God. Barth is not rigid in terms of the words used. He believes in spontaneity in one's private prayers. Although he loves the "vocabulary, syntax, and style" of the "theologically more substantial

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., III/4,101.      <sup>28</sup>Ibid., III/4,110-115.

and linguistically more powerful texts" of ancient writers, Barth believes that prayer must be alive and from the heart. In this, he is rooted in the tradition of Calvin and Luther, who, he said, certainly knew how to pray.<sup>29</sup>

A sample prayer which Barth gave while leading a congregation in worship shows a Father-like masculine Deity with great power, compared to humans, a petition-type discursive style, and an emphasis upon Jesus Christ. Although some may be well pleased with Barth's dogmatic, single-minded notion of prayer, women and men with a feminist consciousness will find his theology of prayer limiting, if not oppressive. Barth attempts, in his theology of prayer, to free people to pray, without unnecessary concerns, but he is blind to the skewed identifying and affiliative barriers he maintains.

"Thy People, Thy Congregation"

Oh God, our Father and Lord: We Thy people, Thy congregation have gathered here in Thy presence. We know that we are a people that gives Thee little honor, and a congregation which Thou couldst rightly reproach with having again and again wandered from Thee as a whole and individually. But Thou hast called us in Thy great mercy, and so we are come to pray to Thee, to thank Thee, to praise Thee as well or as poorly as we are able. Be Thou among us in this hour! Take away all that is false, perverted, and dangerous, all distraction, all misunderstanding, all boredom from our speaking and hearing. Open Thou our mouths and ears, and enlighten and quicken us so that we shall not be idle speakers and hearers, but in Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent,

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., III/4, 114-5, and Barth, Prayer, 12.

doers of Thy word, and thus men (sic) in whom Thou are well pleased. Amen.<sup>30</sup>

#### EMPHASIS UPON RECEPTIVITY:

#### SCHLEIERMACHER ON PRAYER

Whereas Barth focuses upon explicit prayer as communication from humans to God, Schleiermacher sees the communication as taking place primarily in the opposite direction. And Schleiermacher has practically as little room in his theology of prayer for discursive wish-making as Barth does for silence.

These theologians differ with regard to who is active and who is receptive. For Barth, humans act in prayer, responding to God's command to pray, then God receives the request and acts accordingly. For Schleiermacher, God has plans, desires, and actions already prepared for humans. We are simply to receive God's greatest good. Prayer functions to enable us to be receptive to this good. Our action, if there is any, is only to make ourselves more responsive to God's will. We need not even speak a word to God, only listen and observe.

Schleiermacher thinks of God as a Being, separate from humans, but he often speaks in immanental terms. The basis for his concept of revelation is that we are or can be made aware of our absolute dependence upon God. He

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<sup>30</sup>Karl Barth, Selected Prayers (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965) 49.

recognizes, then, the need for affiliation, especially dependence. However, it is not surprising that he also places a conscious emphasis upon our being made in God's image and being raised to God's own likeness, as seen in the excerpt which is quoted below. He thereby senses both the affiliation and identifying needs in prayer and addresses them outright. Writing in the first half of the nineteenth century, Schleiermacher certainly had a predominantly masculine notion of God. However, he spoke of the importance of intuition and feeling, for men as well as women. These were traditionally held to be traits in which women excel. It is not surprising that with his more flexible view of God (transcendent and immanent) and his conscious attention to what were considered feminine traits and what were held to be masculine traits, he would be more open to the fulfillment, for both women and men, of the affiliative and identifying needs in relation to God.

Although Schleiermacher uses the possessive pronoun, "His," he has many more creative names for Divinity than just "Father." In the passage below, which is a list of descriptions of prayer at the close of one of his sermons, Schleiermacher uses the titles, "Creator" and "Ruler" for the Deity. The stress on the receptive mode of communication is clear.

A heart-stirring thought of the Creator, when our eye rests on His (sic) works, out of the quiet delight which we take in His creation; a thought of the Ruler of the world, checking our false estimates, amidst our talk of the fortunes and understandings of men; a

sense of Him whose image becomes manifest in us when we feel ourselves overflowing with love and good-will, amidst the social enjoyment of those noble human feelings; a glad sense of His love when we are enjoying His gifts; when we succeed in some good work, a thankful sense of His support; when we meditate on His commandments, the great hope that He wishes to raise us to His own likeness; this is true prayer: the blessings of which I heartily desire we may all abundantly enjoy.<sup>31</sup>

While Barth looked first to the Scriptures for the revelation of God and found there God's command to pray and Christ's example of one who prayed with petitions, Schleiermacher looked to immediate experience for revelation of God. "Piety" is a crucial word for Schleiermacher. One has "piety" to the degree that one is consciously aware of being absolutely dependent upon God.<sup>32</sup> Every human being has a predisposition to "God-consciousness." This is a gift of God for us. Not only does the world offer "an abundance of stimuli" to the human spirit, to foster the development of "God-consciousness," but also there is a universal readiness from within. The crucial difference between Christ and other humans is to be found in the degree of "God-consciousness." Christ was a man who contained a "powerful God-consciousness." He differed from others by the "constant potency of his God-consciousness."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Friederich Schleiermacher, Selected Sermons (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, n.d.) 51.

<sup>32</sup>Friederich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1928) 5,6,12,18,25.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 238,252,244,253,385.

Schleiermacher differentiates two styles of prayer. The prayer he prefers is close to Barth's implicit style, but Schleiermacher attempts to describe how it is implemented consciously. This description is found in a sermon entitled "The Power of Prayer" as "joining the thought of God with every thought of any importance that occurs to us."<sup>34</sup> Later in the same article he proceeds, "true prayer" is that which we offer when "we have the living thought of God accompanying, purifying and sanctifying all our other thoughts, feelings and purposes."<sup>35</sup> Schleiermacher is most committed to the prayer-without-ceasing model of constant "God-consciousness" maintained while one functions in daily tasks.

He is aware of another common usage of prayer in a form which he says is similar to wishing combined with a consciousness of God. In Christian Faith, he parenthetically defines prayer in this second fashion, as "the inner combination with the God-consciousness of a wish for full success."<sup>36</sup> In the article mentioned he gives his permission for this second variety of prayer:

If we are to bring all our thoughts into harmony with the thought of God, then we may and shall direct our wishes to certain things that we desire to occur to, or be averted from ourselves or others.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Schleiermacher, Selected, 39.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>36</sup>Schleiermacher, Christian, 669.

<sup>37</sup>Schleiermacher, Selected, 39.



His wrestling with the wishful type of prayer leads him to an appreciation of it if and only if the wish is compatible with, or of concern to the Kingdom of God.<sup>38</sup> Here he is clearly far from Barth, who did not want us to have concern over what we pray about. Schleiermacher's request here is of course difficult to fulfill, for how does one truly know what is compatible with the Kingdom of God, under all circumstances?

Schleiermacher's reservation regarding wish-type prayers is clear when one understands what he believes about God's immutability and foreordination. He maintains that we can trust that all that takes place is the result of Divine will. That which takes place is ultimately good.<sup>39</sup> As we lay a wish before God, we need to realize that God is unchangeable!<sup>40</sup> There is no need for God to change, since everything is already taken into account in God's plan for all that is. Any wish that we might have would necessarily be, if it were not what God had planned for us, less than the best for us. Therefore, we would be unwise to pray for it. It is for this reason that Schleiermacher provides the criterion for petitionary, wishful prayers: "that whatever does not belong to the Kingdom of God must also be excluded

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<sup>38</sup>Schleiermacher, Christian, 674.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 735 and Schleiermacher, Selected, 45.

<sup>40</sup>Schleiermacher, Selected, 44.

from the subjects of our prayer."<sup>41</sup> Actually, he would prefer to exclude wish-type prayers altogether.

He sees two qualities which are best to maintain with respect to the events which occur to us: thanksgiving and resignation. We ought to give thanks for blessings and learn to resign ourselves to that which we do not yet realize is the best. We should also resign ourselves to the fact that nothing will change with regard to a wish-type prayer unless that is God's will and under God's foreordination.<sup>42</sup> Schleiermacher's frustration here is that he is determined that God's will will be done, that the Kingdom will come. Therefore, all merely human wishes are somewhat absurd, for they imply a doubt about the coming of the "Kingdom of God." Clearly this view hinders the healthy development of the human will, for in fact, one's will should be used only to achieve thanksgiving and resignation, not to make choices and to figure out how to act responsibly, or to bring greater justice in the world.

Schleiermacher notes that Jesus prayed in a petitionary way at Gethsemane, but he reminds us that Jesus qualified his wish with the phrase, "If it be possible," which was Jesus' way of resigning himself to the will of God. Schleiermacher observes that after praying for a third time, Jesus was free of all anxiety and dread, "He had

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<sup>41</sup>Schleiermacher, Christian, 464. <sup>42</sup>Ibid., 456.

no longer any wishes of His own."<sup>43</sup>

It follows that Schleiermacher is opposed to the notion that prayers are answered. The ... "fulfillment does not come because prayer was offered...but because the right prayer can have no other object than what is in line with the divine good-pleasure."<sup>44</sup> If that for which one prays is in God's plan, then it will occur. If that for which one prays is not according to God's will, then it will not occur, and we should not want it to, for it would inevitably be worse than what does occur. There are several reasons he considers it to be a "perverted"<sup>45</sup> device or a "magical conception"<sup>46</sup> to expect God to provide us with the fulfillment of our wishes. First, that belief would imply that we could influence or change God.<sup>47</sup> He worries that if one were to believe that prayers were answered and they do not appear to be, there could emerge a faith crisis in the believer, either by fearing that her or his faith was not great enough or that the promise itself is untrue. It is better to believe that "nothing is changed on account of our prayers in the course of things ordained by God; we must not attach any special value to occasional apparent

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<sup>43</sup>Schleiermacher, Selected, 44.

<sup>44</sup>Schleiermacher, Christian, 674.

<sup>45</sup>Schleiermacher, Selected, 43.

<sup>46</sup>Schleiermacher, Christian, 673. <sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 673.

answers that we may receive."<sup>48</sup> "True religious submission" would be a healthier view, for it would enable us to see that our own wishes or plans were not a part of God's plan.<sup>49</sup> Even Christ's prayers were not always answered, he argues. Christ really prayed for and wanted the suffering to be averted, but it was not.<sup>50</sup>

Barth saw Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as mediators and intercessors with God, on our behalf. Schleiermacher sees these aspects of the Trinity taking a similar role, but in the other direction. Christ cooperates with us by purifying and perfecting our consciousness of God.<sup>51</sup> Christ's support is truly a support of us, affecting us, not affecting God, as Barth visualized the action.

Both Barth and Schleiermacher held rigid views of prayer. For one it must be discursive asking. For the other it should be receptivity to God's will through thanksgiving and resignation. Other theologians provide for more flexible ideas about our conscious communication with Divinity. Paul Tillich and process theologians are particularly instructive in this regard. Each of these schools appreciate a variety of styles of prayer and diverse images

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<sup>48</sup>Schleiermacher, Selected, 47.

<sup>49</sup>Schleiermacher, Christian, 226.

<sup>50</sup>Schleiermacher, Selected, 42.

<sup>51</sup>Schleiermacher, Christian, 464.

for the Deity. Their views, as we shall see, support the endeavor to expand the concept of prayer today.

#### OPENNESS TO DIVERSITY IN PRAYER:

PAUL TILLICH

There are four primary observations I wish to make regarding Paul Tillich's view of prayer. The first is that indeed he does present a strong affirmation of what I call the affiliative and identifying functions of prayer. His view of mutual immanence between the Ground of Being and creation and his insistence that prayer include ecstasy, a movement outside oneself, toward God, recognizes the desire to be in closer relation to God, and yet it allows that this relation takes place through the Power of Being, within our depths. The second major observation is that Tillich understands the "communication" which takes place in prayer as a two-way phenomenon. Unlike Barth, who saw prayer as communication from human to God, or Schleiermacher, who preferred to think of prayer as receptivity on the part of the one who prays to God, Tillich conceives of prayer as communication in both directions at once.

Third, Tillich appreciates whatever style of prayer may elicit ecstasy. In fact, he offers very few guidelines as to how to pray. He does not concern himself with specifying a precise style, but rather speaks to the concept of authentic form and inauthentic form. He levels probably the harshest statement against discursive prayer that one can

find: "If it (prayer) is brought down to the level of a conversation between two beings, it is blasphemous and ridiculous."<sup>52</sup> The reason for this severe judgment is due more to his not wanting God to be seen as "A Being" than to his distaste for dialogue in prayer, for he certainly does not consistently argue against that. In fact, in the same paragraph as the sentence quoted above, he says, "Speaking to God and receiving an answer is an ecstatic and miraculous experience..." His "speaking" may be metaphoric in that reference, but I do not believe that it is entirely.

The fourth major observation about Tillich's concepts of prayer pertains to symbols. He appreciates the life cycle of symbols: their birth, peak periods, and death. He would therefore seem to anticipate what is now seen as a mandatory need for a variety of images of Divinity, to engender living symbols for both women and men.

#### Affirmation of Affiliative and Identifying Functions.

Tillich's entire method for his Systematic Theology

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<sup>52</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) I, 127.

The marks of revelation--mystery, miracle, and ecstasy--are present in every true prayer. Speaking to God and receiving an answer is an ecstatic and miraculous experience; it transcends all ordinary structures of subjective and objective reason. It is the presence of the mystery of being and an actualization of our ultimate concern. If it is brought down to the level of a conversation... ridiculous. If, however, it is understood as the "elevation of the heart," namely, the center of the personality, to God, it is a revelatory event.

is based upon his belief that we experience Being Itself within us sufficiently to ask about and for that Being.<sup>53</sup> He describes the relation between humans and the Spiritual Presence as "mutual immanence." "In the human spirit's essential relation to the Divine Spirit, there is no relation, but rather, mutual immanence."<sup>54</sup> It is the fact of mutual immanence which makes the ecstatic experience as Tillich describes it an important aspect of prayer and which makes mere talking, as if to a partner, somewhat ludicrous. The ecstatic experience becomes possible only when the subject-object structure is transcended. God then cannot be the object of prayer without simultaneously being the subject; that is, God prays to God's self through us.<sup>55</sup>

It is the Spirit which speaks to the Spirit, as it is the Spirit which discerns and experiences the Spirit... the subject-object scheme of 'talking to somebody' is transcended: He (sic) who speaks through us is he who is spoken to.<sup>56</sup>

Tillich describes how both affiliation and identification with Divinity is achieved and required in prayer when he speaks of the "paradox of prayer," namely that there is an "identity and non-identity" of the one who prays with God--"God as Spirit."<sup>57</sup> For him, the purpose of prayer is "to reunite the creature with its creative ground."<sup>58</sup> A new unity is created in which the apparent independent existence

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., III, 127.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., III, 114.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., III, 119

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., III, 192.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., III, 192.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., I, 127.

of a human and God is overcome.<sup>59</sup> Affiliation and identification occur simultaneously in the reunion, the ecstatic experience.

However, there is maintained a definite sense of Divinity as being "greater than" creation, for it is the power of being behind creation. Prayer is a way to receive guidance from God. As there is an "elevation of the heart" or an elevation of the "center of the personality" to God, there is willingness both to experience the Spiritual Presence and to receive guidance for furthering creativity.<sup>60</sup> Tillich calls this guidance God's "directing creativity." It works through the dynamic process of movement from form to new form. Everything that "is" has a tendency to transcend itself in order to create new forms, even as there is also a tendency to conserve its prior form.<sup>61</sup> Even the tendency toward conservation requires some intentionality.<sup>62</sup> The movement toward which we are guided by God is not random: it is appropriate to our circumstance. We humans, who exist (are not pure essence), have the potential to move toward what Tillich calls New Being, which is what Christ represents to humanity. Humans have much work to do, to become what we can be. Prayer is an active means of receiving from God, so that we can participate in God's creativity. Knowing and feeling we are with Being Itself

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., I, 119.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., I, 127

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., I, 181.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., III, 50.



and identifying with the beingness of the Ground are key aspects of prayer.

Two-way Communication.

Tillich's analysis of the receptivity and shaping dimensions of faith can be applied specifically to prayer. We receive from God and we are shaped. But we also shape the world in which we live, and we affect God. He comments upon the dangers of the more sacramental and the more prophetic churches. The former emphasize receptivity while the latter emphasize activism and expectation. This can be said of personality types within any church. Prayer needs to open up both the receptive and the shaping dimensions of a person.

God is dependent to some extent upon humans for being received. There is mutual cooperation in the sharing. God is dependent upon humans in what Tillich calls God's "self-manifestation," but not in God's "abysmal nature." Here Tillich aligns himself with process theologians who think of God as having a "consequent nature" which is affected by creation and a "primordial nature" which remains unaltered. He puts himself thereby in opposition to one like Schleiermacher who is afraid of any kind of dependency of God upon humans at all.<sup>63</sup>

God's directing creativity is always at work, but

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., I, 61.

the prayer of the individual helps that to actualize. Elevating one's "wishes and hopes" to the Spiritual Presence enables them to be "taken into consideration" by God's directing creativity.<sup>64</sup> The prayer becomes a "most powerful factor" in the situation. Whether or not the manifest content of the prayer is brought into existence, the "hidden content," which is always the desire to reunite with the Ground of Being, is always "heard."<sup>65</sup> A man who prays for wisdom in relating to his family members may include a specific, that his daughter stay in college. He may find that that prayer is not "answered" in its manifest content, that is, the daughter may drop out of college. But the man, when he prays, nevertheless feels drawn to the Ground of Being and feels the calmness, strength, and passion which It provides. In that sense, as the man is called outside himself into the awareness of the greater Presence, the prayer is answered.

Because Tillich sees the communication as two-way, with God's directing creativity functioning always through God's creatures, there is eliminated the need for the "fore-ordaining" notion of providence which Schleiermacher held to so closely. Prayer "requests that God direct the situation toward fulfillment." It does not ask God to interfere with existing conditions. The prayer itself is an element in the situation; it creates a surrender to God's will, and

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., III, 191.      <sup>65</sup>Ibid., II, 267.

that very surrendering creates a situation in which God's directing creativity has greatest receptivity.<sup>66</sup> Schleiermacher maintained that prayer is receptivity to God's will. Tillich also wanted prayer to be openness to God's will, God's directing creativity. But, Tillich managed to hold to this in his systematic theology without having to adopt the belief in foreordination, a doctrine about which he disagrees with Schleiermacher.

Tillich likes to speak of becoming "transparent" to God. In prayer first one receives, then one risks being in a state of chaos while one is being shaped. Or, if the prayer is not regarding oneself, one receives, then courageously risks creating new form. Throughout the process one follows God's directing creativity. I think of it as first becoming transparent to God, then revealing God to the world through one's own transparency.

We have noted that Barth believed that Jesus and the Holy Spirit cleanse our prayers, while Schleiermacher believed the cleansing activated by these aspects of the Trinity is effective on the one who prays rather than on the prayer itself. Tillich does not become as graphic in his explanation of the role of the Trinity in prayer. Because the Divine Spirit is always functioning through everything

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<sup>66</sup>Alexander McKelway, The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich: A Review and Analysis (New York: Dell, 1964) 130-131.

finite, it most certainly prays through us, too.<sup>67</sup> Tillich seems to prefer that prayer be "addressed" to God, although he believes that it is possible to retain prayer for blessings "through the 'love of God, the Father, and the grace of Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'" if that does not imply a superstitious division of images regarding who hears the prayer.<sup>68</sup> It is appropriate to consider Jesus the Christ as the Mediator if, and only if, it is understood that God is always the one who acts and the Mediator is the one through whom God acts.<sup>69</sup>

#### Forms in Prayer .

In general Tillich appreciates diversity, and in the specific reference to prayer, he speaks of a variety of forms. He values silence and tolerates petitionary prayer. His sense of respect for symbols and their effect upon the psyche leads me to believe that he would appreciate imagery prayer. I see Tillich applauding what I call action prayer as well as repetitious words, if these draw oneself out of preoccupation with self into an encounter with the Spiritual Presence.

Any form can be authentic or unauthentic. It is unauthentic if it stays on the level of copying the surfaces without expressing depth or if the person does not have

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<sup>67</sup>Tillich, Systematic, III, 116.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., III, 289-292. <sup>69</sup>Ibid., II, 170.

an authentic encounter with reality.<sup>70</sup> Prayer should certainly not be a repetition of prescribed words nor an expression of sheer emotions, for it is an "encounter" with the Ground of Being. I have indicated that Tillich does not think prayer should take the form of talking to God as a partner, an "other." This is because God is not a Being, but rather Being Itself. This is essential, for talking, as if to another, does not lead one to transcendence and ecstasy.

Contemplation for Tillich means "participation in that which transcends the subject-object scheme," going beyond words and their consequent ambiguity. For Tillich, there is an element of contemplation in every true prayer. He suggests that contemplation cannot occur without silence, experienced alone or in worship. Whereas Barth abhorred silence, Tillich sees contemplative silence as a "stepchild" which has only recently been introduced into liturgies.<sup>71</sup>

Because Tillich stresses the ecstatic encounter with God in prayer, he does not stress "what to pray for." He is neither as bold as Barth in stating that we should ask, simply ask, nor as repetitious as Schleiermacher in insisting that it would be better not to ask.<sup>72</sup> Tillich comments that it would be a "completely unrealistic relation to God if

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., III, 64.      <sup>71</sup>Ibid., III, 192.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., II, 174; III, 226; III, 418.

prayers of supplication were prohibited."<sup>73</sup> Tillich fully realizes that this type of prayer leads one to wrestle with the question of unanswered prayers, but unlike Schleiermacher, who wanted to avoid this predicament, Tillich appreciates that there are ambiguities in life, and prayer is not excepted from that.<sup>74</sup>

Tillich makes a distinction between a "Spirit-determined" prayer and "magical praying." The magical prayer seeks only the goal and wants to use God to achieve the goal. A "spirit-determined" prayer is an "expression of the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence."<sup>75</sup> It is a bringing of one's own personal center, including the concern, before God, and accepting God's acceptance of that concern.

#### Tillich's View of Symbols.

Tillich appreciates not only the immense significance of symbols, but also their life cycle, including their potential death "whenever the revelatory situation changes and former symbols become obsolete."<sup>76</sup> He believes that "theology as such has neither the duty nor the power to confirm or to negate the religious symbols. Its task is to interpret them according to theological principles and methods."<sup>77</sup> This statement alone is the stance taken by

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., III, 191.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., III, 280.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., I, 240.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., I, 240.

many who accept the status quo. But, Tillich, in the next few sentences after this citation, gives a further explanation, one which is an apt description of what feminist theologians are doing at this moment:

In the process of interpretation, however, two things may happen: theology may discover contradictions between symbols within the theological circle and theology may speak not only as theology but also as religion. In the first case, theology can point out the religious dangers and the theological errors which follow from the use of certain symbols; in the second case, theology can become prophecy, and in this role it may contribute to a change in the revelatory situation.<sup>78</sup>

Tillich also understands that maturity within one's prayer life may include a desire to create new styles of prayer, with new symbols. He recognizes that this letting-go of the old is experienced with some risk.

Participation in communal devotion may decrease and the religious symbols connected with it may become less important, while the state of being ultimately concerned may become more manifest and the devotion to the ground and aim of our being more intensive.<sup>79</sup>

Tillich is optimistic with respect to the ability of the faith community to include diversity, and he does not restrict himself to precise forms of prayer, symbols, or worship.

The Spiritual community can stand the diversities of psychological and sociological structures, of historical developments, and of preferences as to symbols and devotional and doctrinal forms. This unity is not without tension, but it is without break.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., III, 236.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., III, 156.

DIVERSE STYLES OF PRAYER AND IMAGES OF DIVINITY  
PROMOTED IN PROCESS THEOLOGY

As is the case with Barth, Schleiermacher, and Tillich, process theologians have not given a great deal of attention in their writings to prayer itself. However, the concepts of process thought enable one to conceive of prayer as having a delightfully rich flexibility of forms and images. The ideas expressed here are based primarily upon the views and writings of the following thinkers: John Cobb, Jr., Gordon Jackson, Robert Cooper, Norman Pittenger, Bernard Lee, Lewis Ford, Charles Curtis, and Bernard Loomer.

Using the definition, "conscious communication with Divinity," we saw that Barth focused upon communication in one direction, Schleiermacher stressed communication in the other direction, and Tillich perceived both a receptive and shaping function of prayer, not as a dialogue, but as an ecstatic encounter with the Ground of Being. Process theologians offer the clearest conceptual tools for perceiving a two-way communication. Unlike Tillich, who insisted that God cannot be thought of as a Being, but rather as Being Itself, process theologians do generally conceptualize God as a Being, or an entity or occasion, but they insist upon a quality of God which is equally radical in comparison with most previous theologies. This is the quality of changeability, the capacity truly to respond (out of love) to creation. Their Being is One who in part



remains unmoved and in part functions in true interaction with other beings or "actual occasions." (Actual occasions are the "final real things of which the world is made up." They are "drops of experience."<sup>81</sup>) The unchanging side is called God's "primordial nature," while the responsive, changing side is called the "consequent nature."

I will first explain how two-way communication in prayer is comprehensible, giving examples from various process theologians. Following that there is a detailed analysis of what takes place in the moment of prayer, using Whitehead's suggestions regarding the phases within an "actual occasion's" moment of decision-making or self-creation. Then the types or styles of prayer will be approached, and we will find process thought not only open to a variety of forms, but also offering a way to grasp the need for the variety, through an affirmation of God's incarnation in all aspects of a person's psyche (will, imagination, reason, emotions, etc.). The fourth topic will be that of images for Divinity. We will find a terrific capacity to value diversity here, too. Finally, panentheism will be shown to be a good basis for healthfully meeting the affiliative and identifying needs within prayer.

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<sup>81</sup>Donald W. Sherburne (ed.), A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966) 205.

Two-way Communication in Prayer: Views of Process Theologians.

Process theology posits that at all times there is interaction between every actual occasion and God. This can be thought of as communication, but only when that communication is conscious is it prayer. For the sake of this discussion, I am calling communication received from God by a human, "receptive" prayer, while communication going from a human to God is called "directive." A prayer is also directive if it is aimed at another person or situation, while one calls to mind God working in that person or event.

John Cobb emphasizes receptive prayer, for he concentrates upon our "receptivity and responsiveness to the divine Spirit,"<sup>82</sup> and defines prayer to be the "whole stance of openness to God and responsiveness to the divine call."<sup>83</sup> He suggests that the "primary aim of piety is to conform one's decisions to the possibilities offered by God."<sup>84</sup> He is clear that "receptive" prayer moves one into action, for one responds to God's lures.

Cobb articulates the process view of incarnation,

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<sup>82</sup>John B. Cobb, "The Identity of Christian Spirituality and Global Consciousness," Tantur Yearbook, 1979-80, 41-56.

<sup>83</sup>Harry James Cargus and Bernard Lee (eds.), Religious Experience and Process Theology (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) 364.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 359.

which gives clarity to the receptive dimension of prayer. When he calls prayer the "whole stance of openness to God and responsiveness to the divine call," he is referring to openness in the variety of dimensions of the psyche: reason, will, emotions, intuition, imagery (while awake or in dreams), etc. Alignment is the key word for this type of receptive prayer, for we are "to align ourselves with the directions in which God is already drawing us."<sup>85</sup> We do not "empty" ourselves and let God in, for that would imply that what we already are is in some way not sufficiently good. With all that we already have, we cooperate with what God seems to be guiding us to do.

Trusting the wisdom of our body and emotions and the immediate persuasiveness of images and concepts enables us to grow in spirit better than trying to control all activities at the level of will. Aligning ourselves in this way with the Spirit enables the Spirit to bring forth its fruit.<sup>86</sup>

I quote a paragraph from Cobb's writing that communicates the affirmation of the goodness of incarnation which makes healthy receptivity from God possible. (Incidentally, this is ideal for a liturgical affirmation in worship.)

I find God in the natural processes of my body, when these are not thwarted and impeded by external interferences. I find God in my feelings, when these are open and spontaneous. I find God in my reason, when this is drawn by truth rather than by the effort to

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<sup>85</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr., To Pray or Not to Pray (Nashville: Upper Room, 1974) 18.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 27.

justify myself. I find God in my imagination, when this is free and creative. I find God in my will, when it aims at justice and righteousness. I find God in my spirit, when it orients the whole of my life toward that which is worth achieving and frees me from petty, self-serving concerns.<sup>87</sup>

John Cobb emphasizes receptivity, but he also respects and values what I am calling "directive" prayer. Intercession can be "empathetically entering into the life, feelings, needs, hopes of other persons and consciously willing their good."<sup>88</sup> As one wills their good, one is aligning oneself with God, who is also willing good relevant to those persons' lives. Cobb avoids asking for specifics for others but does see value in increasing our loving attention toward others in prayer, believing that that does affect the other.

Another process theologian, Robert Cooper, expresses the recognition of the two directions which prayer may take.

Prayer, on the one hand, may be purely contemplative and may be said to correspond to God's primordial nature in his (sic) envisagement of the realm of eternal objects. Prayer may, on the other hand, be seen to have as it were a 'consequent nature,' viz, that of the involvement of the actual occasion in which it is ingredient in the process of the world.<sup>89</sup>

The first is purely receptive, without even the demand to respond to what one receives. It is similar to Cobb's "alignment" of oneself to God. The second type of prayer

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>88</sup>Cargus and Lee, 364.

<sup>89</sup>Robert M. Cooper, "God as Poet and Man as Praying: An Essay in the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead," Personalist, XLIX(1948) 474-488.

which Cooper posits makes room for both receptivity and directivity, in conjunction with each other.

Norman Pittenger offers several definitions of prayer in his works. A definition which tends to summarize his general attitude is: "the intentional and attentive presence of God, with the purpose of alignment of self--in desires and actions--with the divine Lover who is our heavenly Father."<sup>90</sup> (Pittenger, more than most process theologians, holds to the "Father" image.) He emphasizes the aspect of opening to God and willingness to cooperate with God.<sup>91</sup> But prayer is also the holding before God by conscious intention those whom we think to be in need of particular help.<sup>92</sup>

Pittenger writes:

If the main contention of this book has any validity, it is apparent that prayer like everything else in the Christian faith and life is a matter of relationship in which both sides, God and man (sic), are involved. Both are involved; and in one sense, both are equally involved, since both are intent on giving and receiving.<sup>93</sup>

In a short article on prayer, Pittenger uses the term "active passivity" and "passive activity" to describe the two-directional nature of praying.<sup>94</sup> Pittenger expresses

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<sup>90</sup>Norman Pittenger, Praying Today (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 95.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Norman Pittenger, God's Way with Men (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969) 146.

<sup>94</sup>Norman Pittenger, "Prayer in Process Terms," Modern Free Churchmen (Spring, 1973) 5.

what Cobb emphasizes consistently in his teaching, that our directive praying will become more and more one with God's desire, as we seek to be receptive to God's "will," or to align ourselves with our grasp of God's purposes.<sup>95</sup>

More than other theologies, process thought offers a way of thinking which clarifies how one is receptive to Divinity in prayer. Barth had difficulty with this, insisting that explicit prayer was directive, that is, asking, but not allowing for God to change. Pittenger remarks, "It is obvious that prayer can and does produce a change in me," but the real question is "whether anything happens in God--and beyond this, whether anything happens in the world."<sup>96</sup>

God is 'changed' precisely in that through his (sic) relationship with the world he is given further opportunities to create greater good and to implement such good as is already there. Such opportunities, in such ways, would not be available to him without the consentient acceptance which the world can give to him. If he were sheer coercive power, he could of course be thought to force himself upon his world, making it do his will; but that is not God's nature nor is it God's way of acting...he works chiefly by persuasion, in the fullest and most intensive sense of that word. He loves; and there is nothing stronger than love, although we like to delude ourselves into thinking that 'power' is stronger.<sup>97</sup>

Not only is God given the opportunity to enable greater good for creation, God is also enriched, for God participates in all that occurs.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Pittenger, God's Way, 160. <sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*

Curtis speaks of what prayer does for the one who prays. "It helps him (sic) to achieve an objective, realistic self-valuation."<sup>99</sup> But prayer also affects God:

Process thought understands prayer as a highly complex process of feeling. In this process God feels our prayers, thinks our thoughts after us, suffers with us, and hopes with us, because the universe is a process characterized by relatedness and continuity.<sup>100</sup>

Curtis continues:

The meaning of prayer for God is that his (sic) hearing, or better, "feeling" of our prayers makes him relatively dependent upon us (though we are more dependent on him), --a dependence which is the inevitable characteristic of the interrelated (and therefore interdependent) forms of process which determine the nature of the process of reality. Prayer, in a universe of feeling and process, enriches God. Liturgy and prayer add to and enhance God's consequent nature. Prayer does not bounce back from a third heaven. It becomes part of the process of feeling which runs from one end of the universe to the other.<sup>101</sup>

In directive prayer, then, God is able to respond, out of love and with persuasive power. Even though God changes, we cannot conclude that what we pray for is then brought into fruition, for there are many factors involved. God is not all-powerful, but rather the most powerful element in a situation. It is still up to the myriads of events surrounding a situation to receive God's guidance. Clearly, there can be no such thing as foreordination, for creation itself participates with God in making the future.

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<sup>99</sup>Charles J. Curtis, "Prayer in Process Theology," Crane Review, X(1967) 29.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 30.

Lewis Ford aptly states the general process view against foreordination.

Process theism...denies that God controls things by determining what they shall be; the course of the world is the conjoint outcome of creaturely decisions made in response to divine persuasion. As omniscient, God knows everything actual as actual and everything possible as possible, but the future, the not-yet-actual, is radically indeterminate and cannot by nature be known as if it were already actualized. God's experience of the world is contingent upon what in fact happens as a result of the creative advance. Since God always wills what is good, what actually happens is not always in accordance with his (sic) will...<sup>102</sup>

Lewis Ford's article "Our Prayers as God's Passions," stresses only the directive side of prayer. He speaks of what he labels "explicit" prayer "as an intentional act directed toward superior beings, usually divine..." He describes this prayer as a time for "eliciting and focusing our feelings and needs in the context of the divine."<sup>103</sup> The focusing and expression occur within the individual as she or he prays, aware of being in the presence of Divinity. Although, as in Barth's theology, the direction is toward God, the focus on feelings and sitting in God's presence is somewhat reminiscent of Schleiermacher's way of thinking.

Directive prayer can be seen as directing oneself toward responding to what one receives. That seems to be the approach which process theologians find most illuminating. However, one could think of directive prayer as meaning self-initiated rather than God-motivated concern and

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<sup>102</sup>Cargus and Lee, 430. <sup>103</sup>Ibid., 436.



care for oneself and others. This is more like what has been known as "intercession." Directive prayer which is an intention to respond to God's aims and directive prayer which is self-initiated concern for others certainly overlap, for ontologically (within process philosophy) we are incapable of ever being self-initiating. We can never know with certainty whether we are persuaded by our own concerns or by God's directivity. Yet there is a difference in the attitude of the one who prays.

#### An Analysis of the Moment of Prayer.

In this section I present a word sketch of my image of what happens when one prays. In doing this, I use Whiteheadian language, which the reader may find impenetrable, for it is a very specialized jargon. I have therefore included in Appendix II a glossary of the essential Whiteheadian terms that I use.

In what I am calling receptive prayer, the person begins to attend to God, letting go of other thoughts, concerns, and pressures. The person may sit in waiting or disciplined silence, allow images to occur, or state in words her or his desire to be, now, especially receptive to God's guidance.

The given prayer that the person prays is composed of myriad "actual occasions." (Actually, a person consists of myriad actual occasions having to do with all of her or his bodily functions. However, for the sake of simplicity

in my analysis, I will consider only the dominant actual occasions that constitute the prayer.) These actual occasions occur serially. I describe what happens in one such occasion, but it should be remembered that the description would be the same for each of the myriad actual occasions that comprise the prayer, one after another.

As the actual occasion concretes, it is offered by God a "real potentiality" out of the "general potentiality." Receptive prayer could be seen as receptivity to the real potential for that occasion. The very act of being consciously "receptive" helps to make the real potential what it is.

When one is open to God in prayer, the actual occasion would seek consciously toprehend positively God's aim for the present moment. One can never have a clear assurance that one knows the divine aim, but one can want to align oneself with God. Cobb points out that our task is to free ourselves of the power of the forces which inhibit our alignment. These forces include self-justification, self-pity, rage, and anxiety. The number one enemy to such alignment, however, is the projection of our own past purposes, including rules.<sup>104</sup>

As the actual occasion begins its concrecence, it receives the initial phase of its "subjective aim" from God. The desire to be aligned with God gives the actual occasion

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 362.

its "subjective form." This subjective form enhances the actual occasion's power to achieve the subjective aim as derived from God. This aim might be, for example, a specific act of forgiveness or the relinquishment of a specific fear. The subjective form would then affect the degree of forgiveness or calm achieved and the ease with which it is attained. If the person did not enter into receptive prayer, she or he may be so preoccupied with other concerns that the lure from God to forgive or to relinquish the fear may not surface.

Supplemental phases of the concrescence will preserve or alter the aim derived from God. Whether the occasion fulfills God's aim or one derived from some other source, it becomes a superject, affecting one's own future and that of the whole universe.

In what I am calling directive prayer, the person consciously formulates a concern of her or his own. For example, one may pray that circumstances work out to enable one to marry a particular person. Or, in directive prayer for another, one may pray that a loved one be healed of an illness.

In receptive prayer, one would aim to feel and act in line with God's aims. In directive prayer, one would seek to be open to the "general potentiality" and to lift up what one judges to be a "good" combination of events. The intention is for good. It may be in line with God's primary aims for oneself or others, but it is also possible

that the intended good may be different from, and necessarily not as good as, God's primary aim. The prayer intention may be just what is needed to increase the "real potential" to enable that good to manifest. But there is a risk in directive prayer--the intention for the good may indeed result in a lesser good than would have been the case if a "conformal response" to God had been sought.

To continue with the examples of directive prayer given above, it may be that God's aim for the one who prays is indeed that she or he choose to marry the person, and it may be that God is seeking to pull the loved one back to full health. In this case, the directive prayer would strengthen the possibility that God's aims would come to fruition. However, it may also be that God is luring the one who prays to realize that marriage is not the best decision at this time, or that healing is for some reason not truly the best for the loved one right now. In this case, the directive prayer is at cross-purposes with God's aims. God's power is quite persuasive, but the prayer has some small impact, too. There may be enough resistance to God's highest aims that they are not accomplished. God's will certainly does not always occur.

Clearly, there is some risk in directivity, for the more specific the directive, the more possible is the skewing from the "best possible good" envisioned by God. However, there is promise in directivity, too, for the very directivity alters the relevant world to which God

offers God's possibilities! This combination of risk-promise leads Cobb and Pittenger to speak of empathetically entering into the life of another or strengthening a loving attitude toward another rather than choosing specific prayers for oneself or another.

The directive prayer affects both the concreting occasion and the future. What one chooses to pray about greatly alters or determines what is perceived to be the relevant future, that is, it makes that which is prayed about more relevant than it would have been without the directivity. Intensity is increased with conscious direction. For example, if I aim to be directive as I pray, I may lift up concern for refugees who are stranded, as yet without a home. I may pray that they do find homes. That is directive. It changes in some small way the myriad of influences upon the world-wide situation. For me and for all events, to some small degree, the future of the refugees becomes more relevant. The potential for homes and compassionate solutions increases.

So far I have focused on the process within an actual occasion. A prayer would consist of numerous consecutive actual occasions. Receptivity, sought at the beginning of the prayer, increases the real potentiality for the following actual occasions to be more and more receptive. This receptivity permits God's highest aims to be more and more apparent in the subjective aim and the superject of every actual occasion. The preceding superjects

of each actual occasion in the prayer influence the subsequent ones and their superjects. In each occasion God offers a new aim, relevant to that moment. In this way God actually participates in the prayer and even influences the course of the prayer (and is influenced by it) in a continuous process.

A prayer which is primarily directive also consists of a continuous series of interactions between the serial actual occasions and God. In this case, the decisions and desires of the actual occasion are again altering the real potentialities, not only for the person who prays, but also for the one being prayed for. That person's life is influenced, even if only to a small degree.

Most prayers would be a combination of receptivity and directivity. For instance, one may direct one's focus of thought around the loved one who is ill, but one may be receptive to God's guidance regarding that person. One may intend to be receptive to God. In the midst of that receptive prayer, one may feel confronted with one's overly consumptive spending habits. One may then move into directive prayer, asking for the strengthened ability to reflect upon the social responsibility involved before deciding to make another acquisition. Or, one may begin with directive prayer for one's teenager to stop seeing a particular friend. But, during the prayer, one may become receptive to promptings which lead one to trust the teenager and forgive and accept the friend.

To the question, "How does God answer prayer?" we see that in the process view God answers by actively participating in the prayer via God's aims for each actual occasion. And, God forever holds the prayer (i.e., its superjects) in God's consequent nature. The prayer has a continued life, altering the "real potentialities" of the relevant events.

Lewis Ford states this in an analogy that likens our prayers to our bodily feelings and our body to God's universe.

We do not ignore our bodily feelings lightly, for any attempt to repress them summarily is not only psychologically damaging but denies them their right to be heard. On the other hand, we do not simply yield to every passion. In responding to our bodily members we should be guided by their feelings, but not dominated by them. Likewise God seeks our welfare by making his (sic) decisions in terms of the widest context of relevance appropriate, but those decisions include taking into account and being receptive to the feelings of his creatures affected thereby.<sup>105</sup>

God is caring for all God's creatures and each of their desires all the time, but God is also eternally faithful to God's aims. So in response to the question, "Does God take up and act on every human desire expressed in prayer?", Norman Pittenger replies:

...in one sense, the answer is "yes," since he (sic) takes each request or desire into account. But in another sense, the answer is "no," since his faithfulness in love requires that he implement only those desires or requests which are 'in accordance with his will.' Here we must remember that God's will is not some arbitrary fiat which bears no relationship to the

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<sup>105</sup>Cargus and Lee, 437.

fulfillment of his creatures; his will is precisely that fulfillment, and especially so far as man is concerned. So we may say that God takes account of all desires and requests, but he implements them only insofar as they contribute to the accomplishment of his purpose of love in its widest sharing. But this is only another way of saying that God is Love...<sup>106</sup>

### Types of Prayer.

Of the various types of prayer which have been used throughout Christian history, process theology can make use of virtually all. It follows from Cobb's valuing of all the aspects of the psyche that strengthening any of these aspects would increase one's receptivity to God's lures. Therefore, approaches to prayer which strengthen the use of the body, emotions, reason, will or imagination would be valued. "The Christian norm involves strength and health of all of these."<sup>107</sup> After reminding us that a Christian does not have to practice any discipline, including prayer, in order to receive God's gifts or God's acceptance, Cobb expresses his conviction that we are free to practice special disciplines and to experiment with techniques.<sup>108</sup>

Pittenger shows the same openness to diversity of styles of prayer, but he has a reservation. Since prayer is a relationship between oneself and God, a relationship which

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<sup>106</sup>Pittenger, God's Way, 158.

<sup>107</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr. "Strengthening the Spirit," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXX (Winter - Summer, 1975) 135.

<sup>108</sup>Cargus and Lee, 363.



Pittenger characterizes by love, there needs to be spontaneity. Prayer therefore should not be made too precise or prescribed.<sup>109</sup>

The conviction that prayer actually makes a difference, that it changes God, the one who prays, and all other occasions, combined with the understanding of creaturely freedom, leads to an ethic in process theism which is quite socially aware and responsive. The particular type of action prayer which I call "social action" is well-explained and supported by process thought.

People are finally responsible for the extent to which they embody the normative possibilities given them by God.<sup>110</sup>

The aim of piety is to "conform one's decisions" as nearly as possible to what one can discern, using reason, feeling, intuition, body wisdom, etc., is the "will of God."

Bernard Loomer uses a terminology to express "the stature of a person's soul, the range and depth of his (sic) love, his capacity for relationships." That terminology is "S-I-Z-E." He gives many explanations of its meaning, including: "The magnanimity of concern to provide conditions that enable others to increase in stature."<sup>111</sup> John Cobb never seems to tire of stating the importance of self-examination as a "great element of prayer."<sup>112</sup> Cobb and Pittenger, in addition to Lee and Loomer, stress the

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<sup>109</sup>Pittenger, God's Way, 163. <sup>110</sup>Cargus and Lee, 359

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 366.

importance of social responsibility in prayer. Pittenger explains that since "each occasion influences and is influenced by every other, there is no such thing as a self-contained and entirely self-existent being."<sup>113</sup> He continues:

...in human existence social belonging, sharing, or mutuality, is a necessity. To seek self-centered goals, to refuse to advance with the world and one's fellows, to rest content in partial achievement, is the wrong about human life which religion has called by the name of 'sin.'<sup>114</sup>

### Images of Divinity Within Process Thought.

Schleiermacher lived and wrote more than a century ago. He had a predominantly male image of God, but he did use metaphoric images such as Creator and Ruler, too. Barth, in this century, was quite consistent in his usage of male imagery, particularly "Father." Tillich dealt with imagery at the core of his theology, for "Being Itself," could not be seen as only masculine, even though he continued to use the masculine pronoun to refer to it.

Process theologians who are now continuing the work of Whitehead and Hartshorne have shown sensitivity to the need to have viable images while one prays. There may be others who have written about this concern, but I cite only John Cobb, Jr. and David Griffin. Cobb wrote in a paper on

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<sup>113</sup>Pittenger, "Prayer in Process Terms," 3.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 4.

spiritual discernment that

the greatest problem with prayer today is the image of that to which it is directed. The reason Oriental religious techniques are so much more acceptable is that they do not presuppose personal communication. The image of God as a person has been closely identified with the God "up there" and "out there," and for the present it is too uncertain and confused to give reality to prayer. Perhaps in time the principle of growth and the call of the not-yet can be imaged more personally. Whitehead can help in that direction as well. Meanwhile prayer need not be dependent on personalistic imagery.<sup>115</sup>

In their joint book, Cobb and Griffin address the specific concern of sexist imagery. They restate what feminist theologians are arguing: "theological ideas, images, and language have played and continue to play a central role in the oppression of women and of the feminine aspect of all people."<sup>116</sup> They point out that Whitehead rejected from his metaphysical idea of God elements that are "stereotypically" masculine. "Against them he (Whitehead) stresses God's responsive love, God's tenderness, and God's sharing of human suffering, ..." They indicate that there is with Whitehead a "shift in the balance from traditionally masculine attributes to traditionally feminine ones." Cobb and Griffin are aware that "traditional" attributes may not be the way women and men really are, and that these have been defined exclusively by men in the

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<sup>115</sup>Cargus and Lee, 363.

<sup>116</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976) 132-133.

past.<sup>117</sup> They go a bit further. They not only recognize the oppression; they also recommend the usage of female images: "given our present understanding of the damage that is done by exclusively male images, theological responsibility requires the encouragement of female images." They recognize, as Tillich did, that it is no simple move "from the need of a certain kind of image to its emergence." Cobb and Griffin suggest that images must express real sensibilities and experience, and only as these change can female images emerge on an equal footing with male ones. They suggest as an intermediate step, before the attainment of real female images, the usage of images which emphasize the feminine, without insisting upon it. They remind us that Whitehead spoke of divine patience and tenderness. He spoke of God as the one who suffers with us, the one who saves us in the sense of keeping us everlastingly safe. They posit that from the usage of these images, more explicitly feminine images of Deity will emerge naturally.<sup>118</sup>

As a minister of a local church, I can understand the validity of their approach, and I use it myself much of the time. It is safe; for it is less likely anyone would become upset by the usage of this "intermediate" imagery, for it is indeed, as they say, Biblically based. However, I am unconvinced that the intermediate step will sufficiently raise the consciousness of worshippers who do not realize

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 133-135.

what masculine domination is doing to them, especially at the level of images and language. It is more risky to speak of "Mother," "Goddess," or "Sister," when one refers to Divinity, but that may be the only way we can sufficiently begin to have the sensibilities and experience which Griffin and Cobb indicate are needed in order to eventually come up with creative new images.

Panentheism--to Meet Affiliative and Identifying Needs Healthfully.

Whitehead and most of his followers fit theologically into the category labeled "panentheism." Charles Hartshorne offers an explanation of the term:

"panentheism" is an appropriate term for the view that deity is in some real aspect distinguishable from and independent of any and all relative terms, and yet, taken as an actual whole, includes all relative items.<sup>119</sup>

The whole of the book, Philosophers Speak of God, is devoted to grasping numerous philosophical stances which relate to panentheism. Hartshorne and Reese, the editors of this book, note five factors which are inherent in a panentheistic stance. First, there is a belief that God is, in some aspects of God's reality, without change. Second, there is the belief that in some other aspect, God is capable of change. Next, God is understood as conscious,

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<sup>119</sup>Charles Hartshorne, The Divine Relativity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948) 89.

self-aware, and God is understood as knowing the world or universe (i.e., omniscient). Finally, God is seen as "world-inclusive," that is, as having all things as God's constituents.<sup>120</sup> The two primary tests for whether a doctrine of God is panentheistic are whether God is somehow seen both as beyond and within creatures and whether God is in some way eternal, changeless, while in some other ways able to be affected, altered, by the response of the creatures. We met with a view similar to this when Tillich spoke of "mutual immanence."

Whitehead speaks as a true panentheist when he says, "The world lives by its incarnation of God in itself."<sup>121</sup> God is obviously beyond the world, yet God is what offers the possibility for all that is to be.

In an often-cited passage Whitehead poses a group of antitheses "in which there is a shift of meaning which converts the opposition into a contrast."<sup>122</sup> I list only three:

It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God,  
as that God is immanent in the World.  
It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as  
that the World transcends God.  
It is as true to say that God creates the World, as  
that the World creates God.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Charles Hartshorne, Philosophers Speak of God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) 15-17.

<sup>121</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Religion in the Making (New York: Macmillan, 1926) 156.

<sup>122</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1929) 527-528.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

In this we see the "mutual immanence" of which Tillich spoke. We see God as both immanent and transcendent. And, we see God being influenced by the choices of events within the world, even as God persuades these events with God's powerful lures.

There is a clear connection between this strong and beautiful affirmation of panentheism and the self-conscious acceptance of affiliation and identification with the Deity. Whitehead speaks of God as "the ideal companion who transmutes what has been lost into a living fact within his (sic) own nature."<sup>124</sup> Later he speaks again of God as a companion, "In this sense, God is the great companion--the fellow-sufferer who understands."<sup>125</sup> God is companion in that God offers guidance at every breath, receives all individual decisions into God's self, and responds afresh in love with renewed relevant guidance for the next moment. To pray to this Companion requires maturity, for God will not act for us as though we were dependent children. God requires our response, but God is there and gives.

Yet, there is an identification with Divinity. Whitehead wrote of God, "He (sic) is the mirror which discloses to every creature its own greatness."<sup>126</sup> We are united in that all of our potentiality comes from the

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<sup>124</sup>Whitehead, Religion in... 154-155.

<sup>125</sup>Whitehead, Process (1929) 532-533.

<sup>126</sup>Whitehead, Religion in..., 154-155.

possibilities within Divinity. Our future, our present, and our past is identified in some way with God. It is legitimate in prayer to sense that identification in order more adequately to live out God's highest purposes for our lives.

#### SUMMARY

We see that theologians who have intense convictions about the necessity and value of praying have diverse understandings about what exactly takes place as one prays. The communication may be primarily from us to the Deity, in the reverse direction, or it may be a two-way phenomenon. Barth stresses our asking of God, while Schleiermacher emphasizes the receiving of God's communication. Tillich appreciates both the receiving and the shaping functions of prayer, which make for a two-way communication with Being Itself, not a Being. In process thought we can clarify the concept of two-way communication by thinking of prayer as being at times directive and at times receptive.

These four schools of theology vary in their ability to enable women to grow in the areas we need to today. Self-respect, including self-definition and a healthy sense of power, as well as the development of the will, is virtually impossible with Barth's theology. Schleiermacher's theology undercuts the human will. Self-respect, the wise use of one's will, and courage is encouraged most adequately within the theologies which follow



Whitehead and Tillich. Power between humans and Divinity is seen as mutual in these theologies, although of course Divine power is more persuasive or has more power of being. The individual is seen as having freedom to respond to God's lures or to Christ as New Being, so there is an affirmation of the will and therefore social responsibility. Courage is addressed again and again by Tillich, both in recognition of its necessity and in affirmation of its possibility. A major vision of feminists, cooperation rather than competition, is a part of the ontology of these two schools. I believe there is more hope for human cooperation when the cooperative model is perceived in Being Itself!

## CHAPTER 3

## EXPANDING STYLES OF PRAYER

Prayer has the potential to help in the process of growth which women and men are undergoing today. But the potential of prayer is mere potential as long as we have a myopic idea of what prayer is. I am convinced that as long as prayer is assumed to be only discursive talking to a Divine Male, the potential of prayer will remain hidden. Men will continue to identify with the Deity's power in an unhealthy egoistic way, as women continue to internalize a sense of dependence upon males, without the balancing qualities of independence and interdependence. I imagine that men will continue to have difficulty being healthfully dependent, especially upon women. I suggest that only if we expand our notions of prayer can prayer be a part of the resolution of the problem confronting women and men today rather than being itself a contributing factor.

I now consider more closely the alternative styles of prayer which Christians have used at various times during history. Although some have found great benefit in these styles, these prayer types have not been given wide attention within Protestant Christianity. The categories into which I place these styles are: silence, imagery prayer, repetitious words, and action as prayer. After

looking at these, I will examine discursive prayer, analyzing its strengths and weaknesses (when used in conjunction with other prayer forms).

## SILENCE

Silence is much more than the absence of sound. It is not prayer that employs words and sentences on a sub-vocal level. That is really discursive prayer. Rather, silence is the product of a quality of the mind in which words are not sought. Eastern religions have developed the practice of silence much more thoroughly than Western religions, which are more word-oriented. However, for centuries there have been Christians who have seen the value of silence, both on an individual and group scale. Violet Hodgkin writes that the earliest records of the use of silence were often in connection with solitary prayer.<sup>1</sup> Early in Christian history silent worship became compulsory for many monastic communities, but it did not exist in public worship.<sup>2</sup>

I explain here three types of silence. The first is "Waiting Silence," practiced mainly by the Society of Friends (Quakers). It is primarily a group phenomenon, but it can be practiced to some extent by an individual alone.

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<sup>1</sup>Violet L.Hodgkin, Silent Worship (London: Headley, 1919) 23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 24.

The second type of silence is suggested by St. Theresa of Avila. It is what she calls the "Prayer of the Quiet," in her book, Interior Castle, which she wrote in the year 1577.<sup>3</sup> The third type of silence I have labeled "Disciplined Silence," for it requires strict concentration.

Waiting Silence of the Friends.

Attempts to hold worship with silence as a large ingredient were at first met with great resistance. A society in Paris in 1209 which cultivated silence in order to discover the Inner Presence was broken up as heretical.<sup>4</sup> There were some movements in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries which allowed silence in worship when it arose. However, the first meetings in which silence was not accidental were held by the "Family of Love" in the mid-sixteenth century. The founder of the Familists was Henry Nicholas of Munster.<sup>5</sup> The Seekers (small groups in various parts of England)<sup>6</sup> were the first to use what is most like the Quaker silence known today. They were not as silent as the Familists, but in William Penn's words: they "waited together in silence, and as anything arose in one of their minds that they thought favored with a Divine Spring, so they

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<sup>3</sup>Teresa of Avila, Interior Castle (New York: Image Books, 1961) 17.

<sup>4</sup>Hodgkin, 36.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 42

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 44.

sometimes spoke"<sup>7</sup> Seekers joined the Quakers very early in Quaker history. The Quakers sought to preserve silence as the prevailing norm, but they wanted to maintain the liberty to speak if one of the members felt drawn to do so.<sup>8</sup>

Charles Lamb described early Quaker meetings:

More frequently the meeting is broken up without a word having been spoken. But the mind has been fed. You go away with a sermon not made with hands. You have bathed with stillness.<sup>9</sup>

Groups of Friends today gather to sit in silence. If one member has a strong urge to speak and senses that that urge is Divine guidance, then she or he does speak. Sometimes the analogy to a well is made: the deep springs within oneself are touched, and the nourishment must be shared. At times the words spoken by various members are connected by theme, but it is possible there is no logical connection.<sup>10</sup> The Deity's messages are considered to be offered in the Silence as well as in any words which are spoken.<sup>11</sup>

"Waiting Silence" is not easy. The literature of the Friends includes concerns over too much speaking which seems not quite inspired, "little more than a political

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<sup>7</sup>Stanislaw Zielinski, Psychology and Silence (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1975) 26.

<sup>8</sup>Hodgkin, 61.

<sup>9</sup>Zielinski, 28.

<sup>10</sup>Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1960) #234.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., #235.

forum,"<sup>12</sup> and concern over becoming drowsy or sleepy rather than being attentive and alert to the Inner Presence. Rufus Jones said,

Silence itself, of course, has no magic. It may be just sheer emptiness, absence of words or noise or music. It may be an occasion for slumber, or it may be a dead form. But it may be an intensified pause, a vitalised hush, a creative quiet, an actual moment of mutual and reciprocal correspondence with God. The actual meeting of man (sic) with God and God with man is the very crown and culmination of what we can do with our human life here on earth.<sup>13</sup>

A modified version of the waiting silence could be practiced by an individual alone, simply by not forcing oneself to think of what to pray for. One could sit in silence, seeking not to dwell on the myriad of items that wander through the mind. But, if something arises which one senses to be from that inner well, then one could allow oneself to dwell on that, until it feels right to move back into the silence once again.

Notice that in the language which is used to describe this style of prayer there is attention to both the identification and affiliative aspects of prayer. The deep springs within oneself are touched. One cultivates in silence the discovery of the Inner Presence. In other words, as one sits in silence, one senses within one's own depths some sense of the Spiritual Presence and power. But that

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<sup>12</sup>Elton D. Trueblood, The People Called Quakers (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1971) 125.

<sup>13</sup>Christian Faith..., #244.

identification is very close to communion, the deep sharing of oneself with an "other." There is, as Rufus Jones said, mutual and reciprocal correspondence with God."<sup>14</sup> Both identification with and affiliation with Divinity are experienced in silence, often at one and the same time, without any conscious differentiation. At times there is conscious recognition of the paradox: the more one senses identification with the image, the more one also experiences the Companion. The lack of compulsive speaking reduces the emphasis upon the Deity as "Wholly Other." But the attitude of waiting is an affirmation that there is indeed a transcendent aspect of Deity upon which to wait. One waits for oneself to quiet, to allow the "Other" which moves through oneself to make Itself known.

Prayer of the Quiet--St. Teresa of Avila.

This form of silence cannot be sought after and is ineffable; therefore, there is not a great deal which can be said about it. One speaks by way of analogies. St. Teresa speaks of seven mansions in the "Interior Castle" of prayer. The Prayer of the Quiet occurs about midway through the journey, after one is very well-established in prayer and meditation. Rather than trying to achieve a silence, this quiet comes upon one by the sheer grace and timing of the Deity. It is a kind of hush which may occur regardless

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

of what one is doing. St. Teresa called it "the greatest peace and quietness and sweetness within ourselves..."<sup>15</sup>

She uses a water metaphor to explain the difference between this unsought quiet and the fruits which accompany the worked-for meditation. Two large basins are filled with water in different ways: in one the water comes from a long distance, with the aid of human skill, but "the other has been constructed at the very source of the water and fills without making any noise." The water brought by human skill corresponds to the spiritual sweetness produced by meditation.

It reaches us by way of thoughts; we meditate upon created things and fatigue the understanding; and when at last, by means of our own efforts, it comes, the satisfaction which it brings to the soul fills the basin, but in doing so makes a noise.<sup>16</sup>

This type of silence is conscious communication as it takes place, for one is aware of an encounter and "non-verbal" communication with the Divinity, but this type of prayer is not intentionally initiated by the person.

### Disciplined Silence.

Disciplined silence has been used for centuries by Zen Buddhists, who call quiet sitting, "zazen."<sup>17</sup> As in waiting silence, there is an attempt to concentrate, but

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<sup>15</sup>Teresa of Avila, 81.      <sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Philip Kapleau, The Three Pillars of Zen (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965) 238.



unlike that type, disciplined silence does not "wait" for any words to come. There is an expectation to maintain the silence, to go deeper and deeper into it, as one's distracting, fleeting thoughts become less frequent. One seeks to let go of any thought, body sensation, or feeling. When something comes to one's attention, it is simply recognized, then released. This silence is incredibly difficult to practice, for as soon as one seeks not to think, one discovers all the thoughts and sensations which persist as chatter in the mind.

Zen Buddhists do not think of an "other" with whom one prays. Yet, I am convinced that if one enters into disciplined silence with a prior expectation that sharing with Divinity is taking place, then, at an unconscious level, that communication has been enhanced. One may argue that this is a "spiritual discipline," but not "prayer," because the communication which takes place is not conscious. However, it is also true that the decision to enter into the time of attention is conscious. Therefore, one is consciously opening oneself to communication with Divinity, knowing that much of that communication will be at an unconscious level.

Some Christians practice this silence before using other types of prayer. It helps one to become centered, relaxed, and open. A woman in a prayer group commented that she found this silence compatible with the ethical challenge of Christianity: to transcend one's own preoccupation with

one's own thoughts once in a while!

Silent Prayer--Given Today's Predicament.

Many people have frustration with silence simply because they do not comprehend its value. One member of a prayer group I led found that she simply could not practice either the waiting silence or the disciplined silence, in her first few attempts to do so. She kept feeling she ought to be "doing something" with her time. So, she chose to use discursive prayer, subvocally. Later she, more than any other member of the prayer group, appreciated the amazing freedom which silence brought. Silent prayer began to enable her to release her concerns for a while. Silence was, she discovered as she practiced it, a time of handing over the concerns, "shelving them," while she focused attention solely upon the Presence of Divinity.

It is definitely an act of will to maintain silence. In both waiting and disciplined silence one must develop intense concentration. In "Waiting Silence," one strengthens one's will as one decides whether what one receives is Divine guidance, of sufficient urgency to share. Also, one strengthens the will by speaking, even if one feels reluctant, when one is convinced that one is being so called. In "Disciplined Silence," the constant movement of attention away from distractions may be the way par excellence to develop will power!

I have observed that silence is associated with

theologies which affirm the immanental nature of Divinity. This may be due to the fact that this method relies upon the receiving dimensions of the person. I propose that silence as a prayer style may be excellent for building self-respect, in both its self-definition and power foci. Self-definition is prompted because one learns much about oneself as one sits in silence. One is often confronted with the pettiness of one's thoughts and the ease with which one is distracted.

However, precisely because one is confronted with aspects of oneself that one may not have faced before, it requires and develops courage. Those who practice silence indicate warnings for beginners. Stanislaw Zielinski advises that the first condition for achieving silence is to know as much as possible about oneself. One is not frightened by what one already knows, so the silence can be entered into without fear.<sup>18</sup> William Johnston explains what he calls the "filter theory" of the mind. In silence, protective barriers which generally function to keep a large field of reality from our conscious awareness are reduced, so that greater knowledge is available. In this sense, the mind is "expanded." Properly used, this intuitive knowledge can be integrated into the rational knowledge one has about oneself. But, if wisdom is not used, this additional intuitive insight can be disruptive.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Zielinski, 8-19.

<sup>19</sup>William Johnston, Silent Music (New York: Harper and Row, 1974) 56-57.

In a group experience, silence is particularly unique in its sense of cooperation. When strict silence is held there can be no one person who dominates or leads. Silence becomes a levelizer. When waiting silence is used there will be those who speak more frequently and those who are more quiet. It takes cooperation to maintain the proper balance within the group. But even those who do not speak are affirmed as participating fully, for the intention is to be silent. This is quite different from the experience of a group which is practicing discursive prayer, for those who remain quiet are generally perceived as "not praying." Silence becomes a cooperative model in which there is sharing at levels seldom attended to.

#### IMAGERY PRAYER

Many people use visualization when they pray without thinking about it very much. They "see" the person or event for which they pray in their "mind's eye," visualizing healing, wholeness, or harmony. In contemporary practice medical doctors and counselors are using directed imagery more and more to aid their clients' healing processes. Some imagery prayer is quite like intercessory or petitionary prayer in that one visualizes things as one believes the Deity is calling them to be. For example, one images a child functioning well in school while consciously thinking of the Deity acting in that child's life as wisdom, harmony, and guidance. As Schleiermacher would say, one combines the

consciousness of God with the concern, the wish, that the child do well. But, rather than just verbalizing this wish, one visualizes, perhaps in great detail, the child cooperating in physical education, doing her or his homework with interest, responding to questions in class, getting along well with friends. The imagery assists one to sense that the change can take place, and in so doing, it also changes the one who prays. The situation is seen in a new light.

One very simple use of imagery in prayer is to visualize a situation or concern surrounded by light. As one visualizes light, one is using that symbol to evoke an association between the symbol and the concern. Seeing light around a dinner table in a stressful family setting, visualizing light around a person whom we love, imaging a city in which there has been turmoil as filled with light--all these are ways of become aware of the Spiritual Presence in the situations. The visualization is both directive and receptive. The one who prays is open to the light, and to a changed, more trusting attitude about the situation, but also there is a directive thought and feeling which does move toward the area of concern.

Rather than using imagery in a directive fashion, such as seeing a situation as one believes the Deity would want it, or visualizing it in light, one can choose an imagery prayer practice which focuses upon receiving guidance.

Jesus' parables evoke a rich array of images--

mustard seeds, seeds landing on various turfs, hidden treasures, laborers at work, sibling rivalries, shepherds looking for lost sheep, a woman looking for a lost coin. Spiritual disciplines such as St. Ignatius' "Spiritual Exercises" have grown out of reflection upon these rich images. Ignatius prepared his exercises in 1533 in order to guide his fellow priests and lay people in devotional work. He suggested that one envision oneself as being present in the dramatic moments of Christ's life, interacting with the people and asking for guidance. He encouraged imaginary dialogues between the one who is praying and Joseph, the "Blessed Mother," Jesus, or whomever else is in the scene. This type of exercise is "conscious communication with Divinity" for it is an intentional act to receive, on a symbolic level, wisdom regarding one's life and actions.<sup>20</sup>

In 1977 I wrote a short book of guided meditations on Scripture in which I listed some practical guidelines for a type of imagery prayer similar to that of St. Ignatius, except that I combined a number of insights from Psycho-synthesis and allowed for greater deviation from the Biblical scene.

I cite one example here, "The Announcement of Birth Through You," based upon Luke 1:28-31.

Reading: The angel went in and said to her, "Greetings, most favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was

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<sup>20</sup> St. Ignatius, The Spiritual Exercises (New York: Image Books, 1964) 54-104.

deeply troubled by what he said and wondered what this greeting might mean. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for God has been gracious to you; you shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall give him the name Jesus."

Biblical Note: This is an announcement to Mary that she will give birth, just as Zechariah received the awareness that his wife Elizabeth would give birth. Angel refers to a messenger from God.

For Your Meditation: Whether you are a man or a woman, you can experience birth in many ways: the birth of a project in your life; the birth of a gift to offer your family, your community, the world; the birth of an idea; the birth of a child. Allow yourself in this meditation to be open to the many meanings of birth. You may want to create a meditation based upon Zechariah (Luke 1:8-15a), for that is a good variation of this same theme. I am using "wise person" rather than an angel as the messenger in this meditation. The wise person for you may be a friend or someone whom you respect, but do not know. Or, it may be a symbol or an unknown voice. You do not need to know now what it will be; simply enter into meditation and let it appear.

Meditation: Sit quietly and relax, taking a few deep breaths....Allow yourself to let go of any thoughts, tensions, or ideas....Simply let go....Now imagine a wise person appearing before you. It might even be a flower or any other symbol of wisdom for you. This wise person speaks to you...saying, "Do not be afraid, for God has been gracious to you; you are about to give birth...." Feel free to communicate with the symbol of wisdom....You may want to understand more completely what this birth is....If so, allow yourself to focus on this birth as long as it feels right for you....If you are not clear about what is being announced, simply let yourself sense the feeling of expectancy....When you feel ready, say good-bye to the wise person. Reflect on your feelings about the expected birth....When you feel ready, give thanks for the potential within you and open your eyes.

Comments on Debriefing and Use: This meditation requires a period of silence afterwards, simply to let the message soak in. Because this meditation may be abstract, remember the three levels of meanings for images.... You may draw the wise person or the expected birth. It definitely would be helpful to write down what has been announced, so it will be clearer to you. Later you can look back and reflect upon the growth that has taken place.

You might even fill out an "Announcement of Birth," or a "Birth Certificate." If you place this announcement on a wall, it may continue to evoke the sense of birth. If this is being done in a group, a discussion might follow. The group may decide to look at the "Announcement of Birth" a month later to see what has taken place.<sup>21</sup>

It is extremely important that work be spent on understanding the messages which emerge in imagery prayer. The prayer is not really over until the rational reflection is done to integrate the symbolic insights into one's experience. The best concise guidelines I have found for aiding the lay person in understanding the messages which emerge in imagery are found in The Dream Game, by Ann Faraday. Her suggestions are written for use with dreams, but they are applicable to imagery prayer, too.<sup>22</sup>

Roberto Assagioli and followers of Psychosynthesis have used techniques for guided visualization with more precision and reflection than any other school of psychology. (Although Jung worked with imagery a great deal and believed that clients could work with their own imagery to derive insight, he did not teach others how to lead guided visualization with the precision that Assagioli did.)

Assagioli was influenced by Robert Desoille's rêve éveillé dirigé, (the "directed daydream) which Desoille began to use in the third and fourth decade of this century.

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<sup>21</sup>Carolyn Stahl, Opening to God (Nashville: Upper Room, 1977) 87-88.

<sup>22</sup>Ann Faraday, The Dream Game (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) 138-141.



His method consisted of having a client "engage in a day-dream while he (sic) is stretched out on a couch as comfortably as possible in a state of muscular relaxation."

Desoille speaks of the therapist:

He (sic) gives the client's starting image, for example, a sword, or possibly, a seashore where the water is very deep. We have him describe this image as thoroughly as possible, and ask him questions so as to evoke details, if necessary.<sup>23</sup>

Desoille explains:

By using these procedures for guiding the patient's day-dreaming, we are able to uncover the full range of the patient's habitual emotional reactions. Moreover, we also expose other feelings which are rarely expressed but which are nevertheless part of his (sic) repertory.<sup>24</sup>

Psychosynthesis leaders use a number of standard themes which are "designed to place the patient in symbolic situations which the patient must have faced at one time or another in his (sic) life."<sup>25</sup> Archetypal symbols which Psychosynthesis leaders use are the meadow (a somewhat neutral symbol for evoking images), descent (to evoke feelings or events associated with the past or deeper unconscious), and ascent (to evoke spiritual growth). Other symbols are: chapels, mountains, mandalas, inner guides, houses, paths, and water.

The interpretation of the daydream which emerges is done after the imagery portion of the session, usually with

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<sup>23</sup>Robert Desoille, "The Directed Daydream." Series of three lectures given at Sorbonne in January, 1965, under auspices of the Psychology Students' Club, 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 3.

the client and guide together discussing possible links and insights.

Wolfgang Kretschmer, of the Tübingen University Psychiatric Clinic, in an article in the Appendix of Psychosynthesis, writes:

Desoille's techniques require the therapist to possess a rare knowledge and understanding of symbolism and great psychological intuition in order to evaluate the waking dreams of his (sic) patients and to retain control of the process of psychological development which the waking dreams initiate.<sup>26</sup>

I testify to the truth of this, yet I also trust that with some guidance a person can use imagery as prayer by herself or himself and obtain much insight. More insight can be achieved with a skilled partner, especially when this procedure is new, but some guidance is obvious even when one works alone.

Possible meanings of a particular image can be gleaned by analyzing it on three different levels. The first level relates directly to the external world. Biblical stories dealing with the birth of Christ describe how Joseph received dreams and acted in response to these images. If one receives an image of oneself leafletting for a candidate for an upcoming election, one may take that as guidance to act more ardently upon one's political concerns in that

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<sup>26</sup>Wolfgang Kretschmer, "Meditative Techniques in Psychotherapy," trans. by William Swartley, Zeitschrift für Psychotherapie und Medizinische Psychologie, I, 3 (May 1951) cited in Robert Assagioli's, Psychosynthesis (New York: Viking Press, 1965) 311.

election. The message may be "go, leaflet." In my experience, most people are so eager to find the "psychological meanings" of their images, that they pass right over the concrete message as one option.

A second level upon which to ask, "What does this image tell me?" is one which combines one's concrete life situation with a symbolic interpretation. Asking for guidance on this level, the leaflet dream may mean that one should attend to the tree that needs pruning. The "leaflets" (or little leaves) are coming. Or, on this level, one may be receiving guidance to sublet the apartment to the "Leafs" family. Or, one may need to "distribute" one's opinions more clearly, or in a different arena than one has been doing. There are myriad possibilities for interpretation at this second level. As one "works" on the interpretation, one can simply let ideas come to mind, jot them down, then see what tends to bring some sense of wisdom into one's life situation. It is at this point that process thought's affirmation of the development and balance of all the aspects of the psyche is important. For after using the imagination in the prayer, one continues the "conscious communication with Divinity" by using one's reasoning capacity, one's intuition, and one's emotions to discern what guidance may be forthcoming.

The third level upon which to ask for interpretation is that which the Gestalt school of therapy uses virtually all of the time. It is entirely symbolic. One asks oneself

what is being said if "I were all the various aspects of the image scene." In other words, in what way am I like a leaflet? What is my message to the world? Who is passing me out, that is, who is advocating my message? What causes do I represent? How boldly am I stating my convictions? Then, one asks oneself similar questions, as if one were the one distributing the leaflets. "How do I share? How do I travel, walk, ride, climb?" One might also ask oneself how one tends to receive messages from others.

I recommend looking at each level for each imagery prayer. There may very well be messages at all three levels, some of which do not even relate to each other in a very clear way. Of course meanings may emerge on only one level. And, there are times when one is stuck. One has a hard time thinking of any possible message, or the messages which suggest themselves simply do not seem appropriate at the moment. It is valuable in this type of prayer to record the images along with the reflection, for it is amazing how frequently an image makes more sense in a few days or weeks. Rereading at periodic intervals what one has observed in imagery prayer is well-advised.

Just as some people have resistance to silence because they do not see the point to it, some also resist the apparently playful art of imagery. After all, seldom have we been encouraged to use our imagination since we were small children. Those who do try imagery prayer tend to find it genuinely fun and extraordinarily insightful. Guidance is

more immediately forthcoming than in other types of prayer. Even if there is no "precise" guidance, imagery prayer often does what Rollo May calls creating a wedge, a crack in one's thinking, so that new ways of thinking may emerge.<sup>27</sup>

The theory supporting spontaneous imagery affirms that we have access to the Spiritual Presence. I suggest that self-respect is required and enhanced, for one is dependent upon one's own psyche as a resource for grasping Divine guidance.

#### REPETITIOUS WORDS

The repeating of words or phrases emerged as a devotional exercise in both the East and the West because it is a good way to concentrate (easier than silence for many). Also, it has the virtue of being something one can know one has done properly; there is a lack of ambiguity. Silence, imagery, and discursive prayer allow for much freedom on the part of the one who prays. As one repeats certain words, one does not need to question, or even to think--simply to act. I do not mean this in a pejorative sense. Everyone experiences times when she or he can benefit from the simplicity and directness of repeating words.

Some people point out that Jesus told us not to pray

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<sup>27</sup>Rollo May, Courage to Create (New York: Bantam Books, 1976) 126.

with vain repetition.<sup>28</sup> Actually, that advice was given in a unique situation, in which the people believed that the Deity would hear them better (or perhaps they would seem more pious to others) if they prayed longer. That is not the reason for repeating phrases in this style of prayer. Here it is the recognition that with repetition one's own self is affected in deep ways.

In the Christian tradition probably the most used prayer of repetitious words is the Rosary of the Roman Catholic church. As one prays, one holds a chain composed of different-sized beads. With each repetition, the next bead on the chain is held. This eliminates the need to count while praying. One becomes familiar with what to say at each bead on the chain, so one's energy can be put into concentration on the words.

To start, one repeats a statement of belief:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Next, one recites the "Our Father," and three "Hail Mary's":

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<sup>28</sup>Matthew 6:7.

Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

There is one "Glory Be":

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

That "Glory Be" is followed by another "Our Father," then there are repeated five sets of ten "Hail Marys," one "Glory Be," and one "Our Father." The last "Our Father" is omitted and instead a "Hail Holy Queen" is said, at the end:

Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears! Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, your eyes of mercy towards us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. O God, whose only-begotten Son, by His life, death and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating on these mysteries in the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

This may sound complex at first, but after many repetitions, with the aid of the beads, this set of prayers becomes familiar. I will consider the problems raised by the images used in the next chapter.

While reciting the Rosary, Roman Catholics are encouraged to meditate upon the "Mysteries," the events in Christ's life. These include the Joyful, Sorrowful, and

Glorious Mysteries (five each) which move through Christ's life from the joyful Annunciation to the glorious Coronation.<sup>29</sup>

Another prayer which uses repetitious words is the "Jesus Prayer." The words to this prayer are quite short and simple: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me." Since the sixth century this prayer has been used in its present form. It originated at the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai and was carried by Gregory of Sinai in the fourteenth century to Mt. Athos in Macedonia. The Greek Orthodox church was the sole user of this prayer until 1782, when the people of Mt. Athos compiled a collection of writings which consisted of their experiences with the prayer. About ten years later this book, entitled Philokalia ("Love of the Beautiful"), was translated into Russian. In this form it was introduced into the Russian Orthodox church, where it was widely used.<sup>30</sup> In 1930, through the manual, The Way of the Pilgrim, this prayer was introduced into the Western world.<sup>31</sup>

Unlike the Rosary and other types of repetitious prayer, the Jesus Prayer is not done at given times with

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<sup>29</sup>The information on the Rosary is from a small devotional booklet provided by St. Vincent's Roman Catholic Church in San Diego.

<sup>30</sup>Per-Olof Sjøgren, The Jesus Prayer (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) 11-16.

<sup>31</sup>Morton Kelsey, The Other Side of Silence (New York: Paulist/Newman, 1976) 114.



total concentration solely upon that. It is prayed while in the midst of other activity, as a prayer which is constantly on the lips, again and again. After a while the prayer moves from being just upon the lips to being a "prayer of the heart."<sup>32</sup> Per-Olof Sjøgren explains how this repetitious prayer relates to other prayers in the daily activity of the follower.

To describe the relationship between all these forms of prayer, the soul has been likened to a garden. To protect it, the owner has erected a fence of strong posts firmly fixed at regular intervals. Connecting the posts are an upper wire and a lower wire, with a fine-mesh network between them. The fence represents prayer. The sturdy posts fixed at regular intervals are the Sunday services, the structural framework of the devotional life. The upper wire is morning prayer, the lower wire evening prayer, and the fine-mesh network between is the unceasing prayer, the Jesus Prayer. When all three are in place, the garden of the soul is protected.<sup>33</sup>

Protestant churches have not used repetitious words as a style of prayer to any significant degree. The Lord's Prayer is recited at least once each week in church, but simply reciting a prayer once does not enable one to understand the effects of repetition.

Although I am generally limiting my discussion to prayer styles found in Christianity, I will say a word about the discipline taught in Transcendental Meditation because TM has made quite an impact upon the American culture. In TM one is given a phrase from an ancient Hindu Scripture. That phrase is supposedly suited to the individual to whom

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<sup>32</sup>Sjøgren, 28-36.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 79.

it is given. One is simply to sit and repeat that phrase, twice a day, for fifteen to twenty minutes. The twice-daily discipline is strongly encouraged. Creativity is promised with the discipline; however, that is developed precisely because various tensions and stresses which would block creativity are reduced.

We can be grateful to this movement for its experimental work with those who follow its practice. In Harold Bloomfield's book on the subject there are diagrams and conclusions about the effects of repeating the phrase for twenty minutes, twice a day. There are a variety of physiological side effects due to the practice within this particular context. Most of these effects would be desirable for most people in our active culture. Some of these are the lowering of the metabolic rate, lowering the breath rate, and inducing profound rest while simultaneously increasing alertness.<sup>34</sup>

The Sanskrit word, "mantra" simply means "a thought, the effects of which are known." Many of the physiological benefits from repeating phrases or words occur regardless of what is said. Clyde Curran, who taught the use of biofeedback, encouraged his students to choose neutral words precisely to avoid the woolgathering which a meaningful word might elicit.<sup>35</sup> However, many religious disciplines choose

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<sup>34</sup>Harold H. Bloomfield, T.M. (New York: Delacorte, 1975) 89.

<sup>35</sup>Comments by Clyde Curran, of the Graduate School of Education, Claremont Graduate School, June, 1976.

words and phrases in order to develop a certain quality, in addition to whatever side effects the repetition creates. One can appreciate that reciting "peace," "calm," or "love," for a period each day opens oneself to the very qualities upon which one dwells. Members of the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer recite daily an "I Am" statement of Jesus. After three months, they meditate upon another "I Am" statement of his. The primary word in the statement ("shepherd" or "light" for example), becomes a "catch" word, upon which they reflect during the day in a similar manner to which the Jesus Prayer is practiced.<sup>36</sup>

We see then that the purpose for repeating a word or phrase may vary. It can be practiced to increase one's concentration and attention, for health reasons, or to develop certain qualities. But it can also be practiced in order to be more receptive and open to Divinity with respect to qualities which one senses the Spiritual Presence is guiding one to develop. When practiced for the latter purpose, it certainly is prayer, according to my definition.

Transcendental Meditation, the "I Am" statements, the Jesus Prayer, and the Rosary are prepared texts or phrases to recite. Some people who use biofeedback choose neutral words such as: "sand," "and," "ever," "plug," "sample," etc.<sup>37</sup> There is yet another alternative, one that

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<sup>36</sup>Comments made by Brion Endicott of the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer, Bakersfield, CA, August 26, 1975.

<sup>37</sup>Curran's list for his biofeedback students.

is particularly good for those who want to be more in tune with their own intuitive processes. One can choose a "life" mantra by attending to one's dreams, thinking about one's strengths and "growing edges," or reflecting with a friend or counselor, to find some particular phrase which seems appropriate to use for a period of time.<sup>38</sup> When I was in a particularly impatient period in my life I chose: "Wise Patience, Be What You Are." Another time, when I was feeling vulnerable about my own creativity, I recited for several months: "Infinite Creator, Be."

There are many precise details which vary according to the discipline. How one coordinates one's breath with the words or whether one should ignore one's breath is a difference found between some schools. There are theories about the number of syllables which should be used. One can practice aloud or silently, alone or in a group. Schools such as Arica suggest focusing one's attention on certain parts of the body while one speaks, in order to open various "body centers."

There are a number of virtues to this style of prayer, even though it is probably the one style which brings the most balking by Christians who are being introduced to these five styles of prayer. It is relatively simple, in that it does not require much reflection. The results in

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<sup>38</sup>The concept of "life" and "text" mantras come from a seminar led by John Biersdorf, of the Institute for Advanced Pastoral Studies, September 23-26, 1975.

terms of physiology are experienced rather clearly, so it becomes its own reinforcer. (The results in terms of qualities being developed are much slower in coming.) It can be practiced alone or in a group.

There are some drawbacks, too. Many people respond to the Rosary, or even to a repetition of the Lord's Prayer, by saying it becomes sheer routine, without a prayerful attitude. This is entirely possible, but the technique itself is still viable. It simply requires attention on the part of the one participating. Morton Kelsey argues that imagery is preferred to the Jesus Prayer, for one is more challenged to see, face and integrate aspects of the self which one might not do otherwise. That is, there is a kind of comfortableness with a phrase. Confrontation of self may not arise as it would if some figure arose in imagery which indicated ways in which one could grow.

As with silent prayer, there is little dependence upon a "leader." Institutions are overarching authorities in the case of the Rosary, the Jesus Prayer, and TM, for they tell one what to say in daily practice. However, the use of "life" mantras can be approached solely by oneself or in a small group.

This type of prayer may lead to an emphasis upon the dependent affiliative needs, at the expense of the more independent possibilities. When words which emphasize dependence are used, as in the Rosary, this tendency is exaggerated even more. The precise phrases and purposes

vary so much that the repetitious prayer style itself affects people in a variety of ways. Self-respect and courage could be enhanced or diminished. If one repeats a phrase such as "Glory be to the Father..." and "Have mercy upon me, a sinner..." at the request of an external authority, the effect may very well be to reduce one's sense of self-definition and power. I suggest that if one chose a creative, self-respecting phrase such as "Divine Guidance flows through me..." the effect could be to identify with Divine Power and to enhance self-respect, will, and courage.

#### ACTION AS PRAYER

It is rare when it occurs, but I have come to believe that some action can be prayer. Prayer can of course motivate one to act, but some acts are in themselves "conscious communication with Divinity." I will describe three ways in which I discern action as prayer: "practicing the presence," "social action," and what I am calling "meditative action." Recall that I do believe that we are in touch with the Divinity at all times, receiving and giving. Yet I limited my definition of prayer only to the conscious spectrum of that communication. Under that parameter, most action, no matter how dedicated, caring, or loving it is, would not be prayer, for usually when one acts, one is not communicating consciously with Divinity.

Practicing the Presence.

Brother Lawrence was a lay brother among the bare-footed Carmelites in Paris in the later half of the seventeenth century. He is well known as one who was assigned to the kitchen to work, but who developed an action-oriented way to engage in prayer in the midst of his tasks. (It is important to understand that kitchen work was considered "naturally a great aversion.") He came to believe that "our sanctification did not depend upon changing our works, but in doing that for God's sake which we commonly do for our own."<sup>39</sup>

His method of prayer, then, was simply to think of the Deity frequently while engaged in his tasks.

It was a great delusion to think that the times of prayer ought to differ from other times; that we are as strictly obliged to adhere to God by action in the time of action as by prayer in the season of prayer.<sup>40</sup>

His rationale included the following thinking:

We must know before we can love. In order to know God, we must often think of Him (sic); and when we come to love Him, we shall also think of Him often, for our heart will be with our treasure.<sup>41</sup>

To think of the Deity while we are engaged in our daily activities may be done in order to share with the Deity, but thinking of the Deity may also be specifically to receive guidance as to what to do, or how to do our

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<sup>39</sup>Brother Lawrence, The Practice of the Presence of God (New York: Revell, 1976) 23.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 53.

actions. The more one intends the latter, the more one has moved into the social action model of prayer.

Especially women and manual laborers will find it offensive to receive the advice "think of God while doing tasks you do not like." This method can be used to make us accept unchosen stereotypical roles complacently. But, that misuse of this style of prayer does not negate the potential it has for truly enlivening some of our activities--both those which we have a natural inclination to enjoy and those which we dislike.

#### Social Action.

This model is typified by people who throw themselves strongly into action in order to bring greater justice, peace, or love to some part of the world. The action itself may be the outgrowth of other types of prayer, but it seems itself to be prayer if there is much conscious attention to wanting to do what seems to be the will of the Creator while one is engaged in the action. It is probably that people like Jesus, John Wesley, Martin Luther King, Florence Nightengale, and Gandhi were accustomed to prayer in this sense. However, someone who is particularly attentive to responsiveness to Divinity while involved in a P.T.A. meeting, a church activity, or community or political events may be said to be praying.

We cannot discern whether the actions of another are prayer, but there are some people who, by the way they act



and speak, give the impression that they combine thoughts of the Sustainer of Life with their movements while they are actively engaged in living what they perceive to be the Deity's will for them and their environment. This is different from "practicing the presence." In that type of prayer one simply thinks of Divinity while one does whatever one is doing. There is not thought to whether what one is doing is the will of the Deity. That activity is appropriate in situations in which what one is doing is routine, or not able to be questioned, for whatever reason.

Social action prayer would be action aimed at making the precise changes or offering the precise talents that one perceived the Deity is guiding one to do, while one is open to that guidance. A minister can preach a sermon, not thinking of communicating with Divinity at all. The minister is not praying; she is speaking out of her faith. It may be that a minister would think of Divinity while preaching, not just think "about" Divinity, theologically, but think "Spiritual Presence," existentially. That would be "practicing the presence," combining the thought of Divinity with what one is doing. But, it may also happen that a minister may be extraordinarily impassioned with what she has to say, believing that she is particularly called to speak as she is. She may then act out of sincere openness to Divinity while she is talking, in a prophetic, experiential way. That would be "social action" prayer. Generally, if prayer is involved in preaching, it is a prayer "given" prior to the

delivery of the sermon, preparing the minister to be open. This is not action prayer, for it does not take place during the sermon itself, although of course the fruits of it may be apparent at that time.

A parent may help to resolve his child's emotional pain, but not think of the Deity at all in the process. He may pray on the way to the crying child. If he senses a "tuning in with Divinity" precisely as he does the caring, that involvement with the child may itself be "social action" prayer.

It would be a useless activity to focus intensely upon the question, "when one is praying?" This does not matter to a large degree. The preacher or the father may function as well from the standpoint of the effect upon the world in relation to Divinity's greatest hope in those situations, whether they give a verbal prayer on the way to the pulpit or the child, or whether they feel in touch with Divinity consciously while preaching or caring for the child. I list this type of prayer as a style partly because stretching our concept of prayer to include action may enhance or expand our conscious encounters with Divinity and in part to understand people who may not pray in the other four styles with much regularity, but who do have active communication with Divinity.

Simone Weil's theology and life communicate what appears to me to be frequent "social action" prayer on her part. Her biographer describes her:

Teacher, classical scholar, intellectual par excellence, and French-Jewish genius; political and religious non-conformist, Spanish Civil War participant, Free French movement worker; factory and farm laborer; poet, visionary, mystic, suffering 'friend of God,' religious thinker and philosopher precariously situated at 'the intersection of Christianity and everything that is not Christianity.' (The last quote was in her own words.)<sup>42</sup>

The theology out of which she operated was based upon action. One must act, get involved, change things which are clearly unjust or oppressive. She wrote:

Today it is not nearly enough to be a saint, but we must have the saintliness demanded by the present moment, a new saintliness, itself also without precedent.<sup>43</sup>

Weil deeply appreciated Christianity and was very close to a priest friend until her death, at the age of thirty-three in 1943. She refused to be baptized, for she did not want to be "in" any group, for that, she believed, would make her in some sense "outside" another community. Her thoughts were frequently of the Divine, as her body was overworking in action. The diversity of her actions and the passion with which she entered into them would lead me to believe that the acts themselves were frequently times of communicating with the Deity, in "social action" prayer.

#### Meditative and Ritual Action as Prayer.

Meditation is a word which I understand to refer to techniques for spiritual or personal growth which may

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<sup>42</sup>George A. Panachas, The Simone Weil Reader (New York: McKay, 1977) xviii.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., xvii.

be used with or without attention to Divinity. One may, in a Psychosynthesis group "meditate" upon a "rose" in order to develop some of the qualities which that rose symbol evokes, qualities of wholeness and unfolding maturity. This can be done for personal enrichment without any thought of or even belief in Deity. Meditation becomes prayer when that added conscious attention to Divinity is present.

Rituals are certainly diverse. The "morning ritual" of showering, brushing teeth, reading a newspaper, and eating breakfast may be quite precise, well-timed, and re-enacted daily. The ritual of baptism may occur in worship only a few times a year and may differ in minor details. Rituals, like meditations, can be simply repeated activities, but when they are combined with attention to Divinity, they are prayer.

We have already seen what is frequently called meditation and ritual activity when we looked at the act of repeating phrases. Silence and imagery, in some of their manifestations, are called meditation. But the modes I have suggested thus far do not exhaust the possibilities for the transformation of meditation or rituals into prayer. Therefore, I am including this category under "action" prayer, for these additional styles require action, but not that involving words, silence, or imagery in particular. For example, one may gaze at a symbol, such as a cross, a star, or a candle flame, focusing concentrative attention upon that, seeking to let go of thoughts other than those

which relate to that symbol. This is parallel to repeating a phrase, but it uses the visual sense rather than the vocal and audial one. One could practice this as one would practice repeating words, without any thought of Divinity. Then I would call it a discipline, or meditation. If one enters into this activity seeking to be receptive to Divinity, or to some facet of the communication between self and Deity, then this visual practice certainly is prayer.

Rituals such as communion are in this category. One takes bread and wine attentive to communication with the Divine Presence, especially in the receptive mode. Singing hymns and playing or listening to music may become prayer in the form of meditative action.

Ornstein discusses two kinds of "meditation" in his book, The Psychology of Consciousness. One is primarily based on concentration while the other is a practice which opens up the self to awareness or experience. The concentrative type is likely to fit into what I speak of here as "meditative action as prayer." He speaks of meditations in the Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic (Sufi), and Western traditions. Since I am limiting myself here to styles of prayer within the Christian tradition, I will simply mention that in addition to repeating phrases and gazing at a symbol or object, one can focus attention on one's breathing, concentrate upon a thought or a paradox (koan in the Buddhist tradition), gain control through concentration upon the physical processes of the body or through exercises of

the body, or engage in ritualistic movements, like those of the "Whirling" dervishes.

These activities are likely to strengthen one's ability to identify with some aspect of Divinity. Naranjo and Orenstein comment that "all object-centered meditation is a dwelling of the individual upon his (sic) deepest identity, upon the reflection of himself in the mirror of Symbolism."<sup>44</sup>

Practicing the presence, social action, and meditative or ritual action as prayer are certainly diverse activities. They have in common the particular element of concentration upon communication with the Deity while one is engaged in activity. That exercise in itself is likely to be will-strengthening. One may deemphasize one's sense of power as one "practices the presence," for the concern is simply to do any activity while thinking of Divinity. Social action as I have defined it here is a radical way of developing self-respect, for it draws upon the belief that each person is needed by the Deity, and that we have the ability to discern to some extent what is our call.

#### DISCURSIVE PRAYER

While affiliative needs are able to be met with other prayer styles, discursive prayer is the form which is

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<sup>44</sup>Claudio Naranjo and Robert E. Ornstein, On the Psychology of Meditation (New York: Viking Press, 1971) 21.

used most frequently to consciously address these needs. However, one must be quite attentive to what one is doing in order to meet these in a positive, mature fashion. Discursive prayer can be merely a pacifier when one needs to lean upon a greater power. In social action prayer, one senses one's own integrity as a co-partner in creation. One aligns oneself with Divine Guidance, as one is able to discern that guidance, and one acts with the sense of being "alongside" the Deity. Discursive prayer can lead to a sense of this interdependence with Divinity, but throughout Christian history, its primary use has been in the more dependent way.

As one communicates in a reasoning, or even chatty way with Divinity one may achieve a variety of affiliative goals. Turning to a Greater Power for security is one goal. One of the most significant goals is to transcend one's own self-oriented perceptions, to gain a broader vision. Confessional praying can be quite mature, if it expands our ability to see. If we do not simultaneously reduce ourselves to mere vessels of the Deity's actions or regard ourselves as incapable of discernment, the function of self-transcendence can be well accomplished in discursive prayer.

Most prayer that is vocalized by laypeople and clergy today has a sense of self-transcendence to it. We tend to pray for guidance for our national leaders, not for our country to get the advantage in political affairs. We tend to pray to be open to understanding and healing in the most creative and viable way, rather than to be specific about how that

healing or growth must come. Perhaps the least self-transcendence is expressed in prayers about Christianity itself. There still are many prayers which I hear and read which expect that the Deity functions more completely, if not only, through the Christian faith. But there is also a growing appreciation for ecumenicity with the recognition that the Deity does move through all religions as well as all denominations.

What follows are a few discursive prayers from sources which differ in style and interests. After reading these, I will examine the ways in which they express sentiments about affiliation with Deity, especially regarding the quality of self-transcendence, which engenders cooperative rather than self-preoccupied actions on our part.

The Methodist Church hymnal includes several resources for worship, including a few prayers. Most of them include language which we do not use in ordinary speech, making our relationship to Divinity seem unnatural and strained. This stilted language may be a major factor in some lay people's uneasiness about "how" to pray. It also reinforces the authority of the clergy. I cite here one of the prayers which is somewhat acceptable to me, theologically, though I regret its exclusive masculine imagery.

#### "For All Conditions of Men"

O God, the creator and prserver of all mankind (sic); we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of men; that thou wouldst be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations. More especially, we pray for the holy Church universal, that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of



spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. Finally, we commend to thy fatherly goodness all those who are in any way afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate; that it may please thee to comfort and relieve them according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their suffering, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions. And this we ask for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.<sup>45</sup>

We see here a recognition of the Deity's cooperation with humanity and a sense of human respect, for it is understood that we can grasp the guidance of Divinity. The suggested affiliation with Divinity offers comfort and guidance, but it requires courageous action, too. Yet, the language is such that we feel like dependent, compliant people.

The next two prayers were favorites of those who shared in a prayer group in the church where I serve.

"A Daily Prayer"

Dear Lord, help me to live this day quietly--Easily;  
To lean upon Thy Great strength Trustfully--Restfully;  
To wait for the unfolding of Thy Will Patiently--Serenely;  
To meet others Peacefully--Joyously;  
To face tomorrow Confidently--Courageously (author unknown)

From a Mother Superior, who wished to be anonymous,  
in Little Book of Prayers:

Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older, and will some day be old.  
Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.  
Release me from craving to try to straighten out everybody's affairs.  
Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details--give me wings to get to the point.  
I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains. Help me to endure them with patience.

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<sup>45</sup>The Methodist Hymnal (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1966) #742.

But seal my lips on my own aches and pains--they are increasing and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.  
 Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken.  
 Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint--some of them are so hard to live with--but a sour old woman is one of the crowning works of the devil.  
 Make me thoughtful, but not moody; helpful, but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all--but Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.<sup>46</sup>

Both of these prayers begin with the address to "Lord." This acknowledges from the outset a power "over," rather than a strong sense of cooperative power. The first asks for courage, but tends to stress the dependent aspects of one's relationship to Divinity, with leaning, patient waiting, and quietness mentioned. The second is specifically for an older woman who has accepted several stereotypes about women and women of age. It shows remarkable and somewhat humorous self-transcendence, a willingness to recognize shortcomings and to be attentive to the needs of others in an attempt to live out Divine guidance most fully. It senses cooperative action, thinking of Divine power as assisting oneself to listen to others, to live with pain, and to care for others as well as oneself.

Both prayers speak in a demanding way, with phrases such as "Keep me..." "Make me..." "Release me..." "Help me..." This terminology is immensely prevalent in discursive prayer, yet I am convinced that it keeps us in a

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<sup>46</sup>Anonymous, Little Book of Prayers (New York: Pauper Press, 1960) 17.

childlike relationship with Divinity. We could become more mature in our relationship with Divinity if we affirmed that the Spiritual Presence "is enabling me...", "is encouraging me...", or "is guiding me...." For example, we could pray, "I know that You are guiding me in the way that I talk, encouraging me to be sensitive to others. I am open to your guidance...."

The next two discursive prayers reveal a healthy self-transcendence in which responsible cooperation with Divinity is shared. Both were written by professors at the School of Theology at Claremont for a 1974 booklet of meditations. The first is a personal expression while the second is apparently intended for a corporate prayer. Each has inclusive imagery, for humans and the Deity, however, they do use the "demanding" mode.

"On Nöt Wasting My Pain"

"Man (sic) is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward."  
Job 5:7

For my pain O God--

Which I did not choose  
And do not like,  
And would let go of if I could--

Give me the wisdom to treat it as a bridge  
A crossing to another's pain--to that person's  
private hell.

Grant me the courage not to live alone  
Behind my shell of hiding,  
My make-believe side which tries to always seem  
"on top," in control, adequate for any crunch, not  
really needing others.

Let me own my inner pain so that it will open me  
To those I meet,  
To their pain and caring--

That in our shared humanity,  
We may know that we are one--in You.<sup>47</sup>

"Hope for the Light of God"  
Genesis 1:3, cited.

O God, who loves and sustains us all, we pray that You will open our eyes and broaden our ken so that the new possibilities and promise before us may appear.

Through the presence of our night let us see the dawning of an era of peace. Beyond the conflict and competition for resources let us see the fresh light of hope--hope for cooperation and interdependence breaking in upon our world. Where men and women face each other with hatred and cynicism, light the lamps of love and faith so that we may see the beauty of human beings who relate to each other with warmth and tenderness.

Where young and old, black and white, men and women, pass each other in the night with ignorance and indifference, hasten the morning of truth and warm the depths of our hearts that seeing each other we may really see and knowing each other we may really know. Reveal to us the fullness of truth--the truth that we are not our own, the world is Yours, and with Your own heart You have loved us into existence and with Your mighty arm have established a dwelling place where people may live in freedom, harmony, and love for one another. Amen.<sup>48</sup>

The final discursive prayer which I include here still has the problem of making statements in demanding or commanding ways. It includes a confession of the attitudes and barriers which get in the way of self-respect and courage.

#### Prayer of Reflection

O God,  
we come to you now  
as children to their Mother

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<sup>47</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Meditations for Churchmen in the Seventies, 3d ed., by the faculty and Administration of the School of Theology at Claremont, 1974, 16.

<sup>48</sup>Joseph Hough, in *Ibid.*, 30.

out of the cold which numbs  
 into the warm who cares.  
 Listen to us inside,  
 under our words  
 where the shivering is,  
 in the fears  
 which freeze our living,  
 in the angers  
 which chafe our attending,  
 in the doubts  
 which chill our hoping,  
 in the events  
 which shrivel our thanking,  
 in the pretenses  
 which stiffen our loving.  
 Listen to us, Lord,  
 as a Mother,  
 and hold us warm  
 and forgive us.  
 Soften our experiences  
 into wisdom,  
 our pride  
 into acceptance,  
 our longing  
 into trust,  
 and soften us  
 into love  
 and each other  
 and you;  
 through Jesus, your son<sup>49</sup>  
 and our friend. Amen.

One major reason discursive prayer has become a  
 handicap for healthy affiliation with Divinity is its  
 peculiar resistance to change in the face of theological  
 maturity. Even people who know the Deity moves through  
 humans keep talking to the Deity as if It were going to do  
 the job alone. I find that we tend to disavow our part in  
 the process of action. Too often we think of the Deity as  
 the only Actor, rather than as Guide and Companion.

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<sup>49</sup>Ted Loder, in Liberating Worship, compiled by the  
 Methodist Federation for Social Action, New York, n.d., 4.

I propose that the identifying needs could be met more adequately if this language were changed, too. We keep Divinity as "other" and often "up there" when we command and demand. We bring our awareness down to our own selves, in a way which affirms the value of identification, as we affirm the Spiritual Presence within and through us as well as beyond.

It is quite obvious that I can identify, as a woman, with the last discursive prayer cited more fully than I can with those which refer to the Deity as "Lord" and "Father." Those who feel like Lords and Fathers will likely have opposite identifying responses. For this reason, we need to use a wide variety of images of Divinity especially in discursive prayer, because it is in this style of prayer that the image is most boldly stated.

When discursive prayer is led for a group by one person, that person needs to be sensitive to two special concerns. One is the prophetic dimension of prayer. There is, even as one communicates with Divinity, a message being heard by humanity. What and how the leader prays sets an example. Concerns may be lifted up which expand the caring potential of those hearing the prayer. The second concern for a leader of discursive prayer is to recognize that those who are gathered have diverse strengths and "sins." One may need to confess laziness and sense a call to act. Another may confess to frantic busyness. Some men may need to pray to reduce their tendency to will

too much, while some women may need to pray to accept encouragement to will wisely.

In groups or alone, combinations of these styles can be used sequentially. For example, time of disciplined silence may follow a period of discursive prayer. Then closure may come with a repeated phrase. Or, silence (waiting or disciplined) may start a session which leads into imagery prayer.

I am convinced that as one understands the prayer options and tries some of these options on for size, one can discover for oneself the most effective ways to pray.

## CHAPTER 4

## EXPANDING IMAGES OF DIVINITY

No image or images can convey what Divinity really is. However, in order to name the experience of encounter with Deity, we give It images. Those images then evoke from us the experience of encounter once again. Two primary functions of the image--not functions of Divinity, but of the image itself--are to aid one's ability to identify and to affiliate with Divinity.

We long for self-respect. This has led us again and again to think of Divinity in terms which will enable us to sense a likeness to It. Recall Schleiermacher's list of descriptions of true prayer. He mentioned the "great hope that He (God) wishes to raise us to His own likeness." Then he proceeded to "heartily desire" that we might all abundantly enjoy these blessings. Schleiermacher found it inspiring to think of himself in Divinity's likeness, but he did not notice that the way things stood, women could not abundantly enjoy that identification.

Theologians like Karl Barth have made an easy transition from the image of Deity to the image of self. They persisted in imaging likeness even when they stressed the Deity's radical distance from humans, our finiteness, and our tendency to sin. It is possible, I believe, to receive a healthy empowerment by identifying with the image we use



for Divinity. There is danger of self-inflation, however, if we begin to identify ourselves too much with the Divinity. The danger is greatest if the image is of one subset of humanity (males, whites, etc.). With a diversity of images, megalomaniacal tendencies for one set might be reduced, while empowerment for all may increase.

The limited options for images which have been provided through Christian teachings has been a hindrance to males and females alike. In our Judeo-Christian religion and culture males have had a greater chance to meet their identifying needs with the image of a god which is described almost exclusively in male terms. Women are recognizing that our struggles with self-respect may be due in part to the massive influence in thinking of Divinity as masculine. Mary Daly speaks to this:

The subtle conditioning effected by the widespread opinion that God is masculine, whatever that may mean, is unlikely to engender much self-esteem in women, or much esteem for women.<sup>1</sup>

She argues forcefully that women "cannot really belong to institutional religion as it exists." She says,

Singing sexist hymns, praying to a male god breaks our spirit, makes us less than human. The crushing weight of this tradition, of this power structure, tells us that we do not even exist.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 181.

<sup>2</sup>Mary Daly, "Radical Feminism, Radical Religion" in Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson (eds.) Women and Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 270.

In addition to seeking identification with the Deity, we also long for closeness--affiliation. I have suggested that women's need for dependence upon another has been better met with a male Divinity, while men have not had the advantage of thinking of a Divine female with whom to converse in prayer, upon whom to be dependent, and to whom to look for authority. Images of Divinity have not provided models for women to affiliate with other females. Neither have the images offered women or men been models for responsible interaction between equal partners of the opposite sex. In other words, a sex-biased image has truncated the potential prayer has for meeting in a healthy fashion some of the affiliative needs of people as well as the needs which provide for a responsible sense of identity.

When we realize the functions that our images play, we can, in a constructive manner, choose images which will be healthiest, for us as individuals and as a society. In addition to this endeavor, we need to ask how clearly our image conforms to our belief about the Deity. How does the image fit the reality to which it points? It is the task of this chapter to provide alternatives to the exclusive use of masculine images for Divinity. One may sincerely believe that she or he does not think of the Deity as male, even though she or he uses exclusively masculine pronouns. After studying other possible images which are available, the awareness tends to dawn, "Yes, my image has been masculine." Then one is likely to be more receptive to the challenge to

try other images. After the trials have been given adequate usage, one tends to notice how deeply one has been affected, at an unconscious level, by the significant images one has used. It may not be best to simplistically replace a "Fatherly Lord God," with a "Mother," or "Father-Mother God," or even a "Beloved Friend." The variety of images are not presented in order to choose only one new image. I believe that having the diversity uppermost in one's mind will keep one attentive to the fact that the images are chosen. For different situations and periods of time, the choice of images will vary.

#### PREDOMINANTLY MASCULINE IMAGERY

O Lord, our heavenly Father, we, thy humble servants, desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant, that, by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and thy whole Church may obtain forgiveness of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion.

And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee that all we who are partakers of this Holy Communion may be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction. And although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offenses;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The Methodist Hymnal (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1966) #830.

The dominant image for Divinity in our culture is not just that of a male god. There has been an "all powerful" hierarchical spirit associated with that god. There is virtually always a correlation between the dominant image of Divinity and the societal roles played by humans. As we are humble, suppliant, before a Divine Lord or Father, we are encouraged to act similarly before human male leaders, fathers, and even husbands. This fact is stated in numerous ways by Biblical scholars, historians, theologians, and psychologists. Patricia Wilson sums up the thought of feminist theologians when she says:

The circular nature of the process of creating God in our image means that eventually we begin to create ourselves in the image we have created of God.<sup>4</sup>

Several people have written historical material about the time prior to the existence of primarily masculine imagery for Deity. Merlin Stone discusses the prehistoric and early historic periods of the Middle East during which the religion of the people was that of the Great Goddess. The Goddess was worshipped

from the beginnings of the Neolithic periods of 7000 B.C. until the closing of the last Goddess temples, about A.D. 500. Some authorities would extend Goddess worship as far into the past as the Upper Paleolithic Age of about 25,000 B.C. Yet events of the Bible, which we are generally taught to think of as taking place 'in the beginning of time,' actually occurred in historical periods.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Patricia Wilson, "Feminine Imagery in an Analogue for God," unpublished paper.

<sup>5</sup>Merlin Stone, When God was a Woman (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976) xii.

Merlin Stone, Wolfgang Lederer, in The Fear of Women, Rosemary Ruether in New Woman/New Earth, Elaine Pagels in The Gnostic Gospels, Starhawk in The Spiral Dance, Edgar Bruns, in God as Woman, Woman as God, and Leonard Swidler in Biblical Affirmations of Women each tell the story of the gradual overthrow of the Goddess in favor of the God of Judaism. Stone discusses the invasion of those people who considered themselves to be "superior" into the lands where the Goddess was worshipped.

Gradually there were changes in the customs, rituals, and myths of the Goddess religion as the northerners began to suppress that religion. Stone suggests that men might have begun to gain power within the religion of the Goddess as they began to replace priestesses. They imitated the female clergy through ritual castration and the wearing of women's clothing.<sup>6</sup> Permanent kinship systems became established, which replaced kinship systems based upon the mother. Finally, a male supreme Deity was established.<sup>7</sup>

Lederer describes the usurpation of the Mother Goddess:

First she lost her self-sufficiency and acquired a fecundating young consort, as Isis needed Osiris and Ishtar needed Tammuz. Then--and this is a logical, not necessarily a temporal "then," for developmental phases do not follow the same chronology everywhere--then the world was said to be fashioned from the body of the Goddess by a male warrior god, the way Marduk did unto Tiamat. And finally, the world is created by the

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 151.

unaided power of the male god alone.<sup>8</sup>

Ruether argues that as the "ego of the ruling class grew more confident, it essayed to suppress the mother symbol altogether, claiming to be itself the creator, not the child, of the mother."<sup>9</sup> In Genesis, chapter two, the order of birth is reversed, so that the female is born out of the male. In Christian times rebirth begins to be valued and accomplished through a male savior. This insistence upon rebirth tends to devalue the first birth, which was from a woman.

Accounts of fierce aggression and destruction of Goddess worship by the Hebrews is recorded in many passages of the Old Testament. Frequently the destruction of the holy places of the Goddess worship were described as doing away with "other gods" and worship of "Baal," which was the name of the male consort of the Goddess. The writers of the Old Testament did not even want to name the Goddess as they recorded her destruction.<sup>10</sup>

Elaine Pagels points out the uniqueness of the development of the all-male image for Deity in the Near East of ancient days:

Unlike many of his contemporaries among the deities of

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<sup>8</sup>Wolfgang Lederer, Fear of Woman (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968) 156.

<sup>9</sup>Rosemary Ruether, New Women/New Earth (New York: Seabury Press, 1975) 26.

<sup>10</sup>Stone, 156,166,177,178,196.

the ancient Near East, the God of Israel shared his power with no female divinity, nor was he the divine Husband or Lover of any. He can scarcely be characterized in any but masculine epithets: king, lord, master, judge, and father. Indeed, the absence of feminine symbolism contrast to the world's other religious traditions, whether in Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, and Rome, or in Africa, India, and North America, which abound in feminine symbolism.<sup>11</sup>

We continue to sing praise to the Father several times a Sunday in virtually every Christian church. And the only prayer which many Protestants know begins "Our Father..."

Jesus introduced the Lord's Prayer and spoke of God as Father, using the word, "Abba," which is more like our word, "Daddy." His emphasis seemed to be on making the image of Deity more familiar, a loving Daddy. He was moving away from images of judge, ruler, lord, and king. Thinking in male terms, Jesus was suggesting a familiar, loving image. It seems difficult to argue that he would have supported only masculine images for Divinity. In fact, by encouraging people to think of Divinity in terms which would be more meaningful for them in their day, he was doing just what feminists are doing today.

Masculine imagery for Divinity has justified the maintenance of a patriarchal society. Because the male god of Judeo-Christian thought has also been quite domineering, in traditional imagery, it is the opinion of many today that Christianity has helped to maintain an oppressive

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<sup>11</sup>Elaine Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels (New York: Random House, 1981) 48.

stance toward various non-male and non-Christian peoples.

Christianity is to be a religion of liberation. Liberation movements persist to point out the practices and the causes of oppression. Exclusive imagery for Divinity is one of these.

#### PREDOMINANTLY FEMININE IMAGERY

Blessed be thou Creatress of Life whose love forever shines within me. Help me to use thy energy to direct my force. Light my path that I may follow it in love, secure in the knowledge that I move from a source deep within me. Let me use my energy to create the world anew. Instill in me an awareness of the rhythms and cycles of nature so that I may intuitively know the time to build up and the time to tear down; the time to speak and the time to remain silent; the time to move and the time to stand still. Let me sense now and always the depth of our connections. For we are all one and the force that holds us together is love.<sup>12</sup>

There are a number of ways to approach the use of feminine imagery for Divinity. We can look within our tradition to the Scriptures for examples of feminine imagery. We can look at what was excluded from the canonical sources. We can focus upon the Goddess, either by attending to our present day experiences or by continuing in the tradition of Goddess worship, through Witchcraft. These are approaches which will be discussed in this section. In addition, two final approaches will be mentioned: the retaining of the word, "God," but with the pronoun, "She," and a proposed "Virgin Mother" model of Deity.

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<sup>12</sup>Diane Mariechild, Mother Wit (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1981) 25.



### Biblical Images.

In his book, Biblical Affirmations of Women, Leonard Swidler devotes a lengthy chapter to feminine imagery for Deity during the Biblical period. After detailing Old Testament accounts in which the prophets fiercely attacked the worship of the Goddess, he shows images which are feminine which did manage to survive, even in the fanatically patriarchal Judaic milieu.

Yahweh God performs a task which is customary for females in the Hebrew society, in Genesis 3:21. God is seen as Seamstress: "And Yahweh God made tunics of skins for the man and his wife and clothed them."<sup>13</sup>

The Deity is described as a Loving Mother in Hosea 11:1,3,4, and 9. She is Giving Birth to Humanity in Deuteronomy 32:18, and is described as Womb in Jeremiah, chapter thirty-one. The Deity has Birth Pangs in Isaiah 42:13,14 and is Nursing Mother in Isaiah 49:14-15. She is Comforting Mother in Isaiah 66:12-13: "For thus says Yahweh...Like a son comforted by his mother, so will I comfort you." The Deity is Midwife in Psalm 22:9: "Yet you drew me out of the womb, you entrusted me to my mother's breasts."<sup>14</sup>

In addition to these metaphors, describing the Deity in feminine ways, the ancient Goddess manifested Herself in

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<sup>13</sup>Leonard Swidler, Biblical Affirmations of Woman (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979) 30.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 30-34.

Wisdom literature, known to us in Proverbs, Job, and the Apocryphal books of Baruch, Ben Sira and Wisdom. The Goddess was widely worshipped as the source of wisdom into Biblical times. The Goddess became known simply as Wisdom in this literature. Wisdom is feminine in grammar, both in Hebrew (hokmah) and in Greek (sophia), but there is not merely a grammatical connection. She is also personified in feminine ways. There are many examples:

I, Wisdom (Hokmah), am mistress of discretion,  
the inventor of lucidity of thought,  
Good advice and sound judgement belong to me,  
perception to me, strength to me. . .

Yahweh possessed me when his purpose first unfolded  
before the oldest of his works.  
From everlasting I was firmly set,  
from the beginning, before earth came into being.<sup>15</sup>

These excerpts show how Wisdom was seen as accompanying the Divine Power, not made by Him, even as His first creation, but with Him from the beginning.

"Spirit," too, was not only grammatically feminine, but also at times personified as an aspect of the Deity and given feminine qualities.<sup>16</sup>

Allusions to the Deity as feminine are not confined to the Old Testament. Jesus tells three parables in the Gospel of Luke in which he speaks of Divinity in metaphorical terms, first as a Father (of the Prodigal son), next as a Shepherd (searching for a lost sheep), and finally as

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 49-54.

a Woman, in search for a lost coin.<sup>17</sup>

Gnostic Feminine Symbolism--Rejected in the Bible.

I will discuss more of Elaine Pagel's insights regarding feminine as well as masculine imagery for Divinity in the section on "Gender-Full" images, for the Gnostics tended to describe the Deity in terms of both genders. However, I want to note here that there were groups existing alongside the early Christians which maintained a high level of female membership and leadership and which allowed for greater feminine symbolic reference to Divinity. These Gnostic groups were syncretistic, gleaning insight from many influences. They affected those other religions as well. Christianity was influenced both by incorporating some of the dualistic tendencies of Gnosticism and by adamantly defining itself against such Gnostic beliefs as a devaluing of life on earth. The early church's movement toward less participation of women in the church may have been strongly influenced by defining itself against Gnosticism, with its high participation of women. It is Pagel's contention that the use of feminine imagery may be a major reason the Gnostic Christians and their gospels were considered heretical.<sup>18</sup>

I cite but one example of a Gnostic prayer to the Divine Mother, invoked as Grace by Marcus: "May She who is

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<sup>17</sup>Luke, 15:8-10.

<sup>18</sup>Pagels, 48-53.

before all things, the incomprehensible and indescribable Grace, fill you within, and increase in you her own knowledge."<sup>19</sup>

### The Goddess--Now.

Goddess as an image for Divinity is being looked at and used today by a growing number of women and some men.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., citing Irenaeus, AH I.II.I.

<sup>20</sup>Linguistic analysis shows how the suffixes on words have changed to denote gender reference. In Old English the -er or -ere ending was a masculine suffix which referred to males only. The parallel usage for the female was -ster or -estre (as a "webster" was one who weaves, a "baxter" one who bakes, and a "seamster" one who sews). In Northern England men began to enter into these feminine professions, and the -ster suffix began to apply to males and females alike. A spinster, for example, referred to either a male or a female who spins. In Southern England the -ster suffix continued to refer to women primarily.

Beginning with the Norman invasion in the eleventh century, the French influence introduced the suffix -ess, which began to be applied to women in particular, for example in "shepherdess" and "goddess." As -ster began to be used for males, the -ess ending became the more predominantly female referent. By the sixteenth century, however, -ster, too, had become used for males as well as females, with the exception of the pejorative meaning of "spinster."

In the nineteenth century the Latin feminine ending -trix was used in a fashion similar to the earlier -ess, as in "obstetrix" (she who stands before to catch the baby).

The suffix in the English language has changed gradually from a gender specific term to a neutral term. But, since males are considered the norm, new feminine designations kept being introduced, until they, too became neutral in meaning.

In contemporary usage the significance of the -ess suffix is not that it identifies a female so much as that it indicates a "deviation from what is consciously and unconsciously considered the standard." This is at times reasonably resented by women in various professions. But, it serves a useful purpose when referring to Divinity,

There are two avenues open to those who seek to give room to the Goddess in their repertory of images for Divinity. One may look at contemporary Women's experiences, or one may explore the long traditions of the Goddess, in what is called Witchcraft. In either approach, there tends to be a resurgence of interest in the many Goddesses of history. I will discuss the experiential impact, functions, and values of the Goddess image itself, first, then turn to Witchcraft, which I understand primarily through reading The Spiral Dance and through conversation with women who participate in this type of worship.

Nelle Morton does not argue for the use of "God the Mother" or the "Goddess," "except for iconoclastic purposes." She has begun to believe, however, that the image of Goddess and the public expression of healthy self-images for women may be the only way to "shatter the old male god image and a patriarchal culture." She thinks that the Goddess could become as idolatrous as the male god. But, she concludes, "in a sexist culture and sexist religion the option for the Goddess may be the only sane redemptive move."<sup>21</sup> Morton distinguishes between symbolic and metaphoric images. "God the Father" is still a symbolic image,

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precisely to point out the conscious intention.

Casey Miller and Kate Swift, Words and Women (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) 47-50, 159.

<sup>21</sup>Nelle Morton, "Beloved Image!" paper read for American Academy of Religion Workshop, December 28, 1977.

taken for granted. "God the Mother" or "Goddess" function as metaphoric images, which say: "Your life is a sacred gift. Pick it up. Receive it. Create it. Be responsible for it. . ."<sup>22</sup>

Carol Christ describes three general ways in which the Goddess is perceived today. First, She can be seen as a Deity with female attributes, a personification of Divinity who can be prayed to. Second, the Goddess can be thought of as a "symbol of the life, death, and rebirth energy in nature and culture, in personal and communal life." Third, the Goddess becomes a "symbol of the legitimacy and beauty of female power."<sup>23</sup> The same woman (or man) may understand and use the image of Goddess in different ways. This is, when we think about it, what is done with the image of God.

Carol Christ observes four reasons why women need the Goddess image today. The first of these is the simplest and most basic, she believes. It is "the acknowledgment of the legitimacy of female power as a beneficent and independent power."<sup>24</sup> The affirmation of female power through greater identification with the symbol Goddess tends to generate a "mood" of joyous celebration of female

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Carol Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections," in Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (eds.) Woman-spirit Rising (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979) 278.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 277.

freedom and independence. This mood provides motivation to act to bring about political change in our society, as one envisions less hierarchical and more communal models of organization.<sup>25</sup>

Christ's second reason for the need for Goddess imagery today is to affirm "the female body and the life cycle expressed in it."<sup>26</sup> Menstruation and birth are not celebrated in masculinized religion, yet they are part of women's experience and need spiritual undergirding. Older women in our culture are not afforded the dignity which is offered by the threefold image of Goddess as maiden (youth), mother (maturity), and crone (aged).

A third value of the Goddess imagery for women today is to give a positive valuation of will. Christ points out what we observed in the first chapter, that women have been taught to devalue our will.

Patriarchal religion has enforced the view that female initiative and will are evil through the juxtaposition of Eve and Mary. Eve caused the fall by asserting her will against the command of God, while Mary began the new age with her response to God's initiative, "Let it be done to me according to thy word." (Luke 1:38) <sup>27</sup>

Carol Christ states that in a Goddess-centered context, "A woman is encouraged to know her will, to believe that her will is valid, and to believe that her will can be achieved in the world." She calls these three powers ones which have been denied to women in traditional patriarchy.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 278.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 279.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 283.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 284.

The fourth reason Goddess imagery is important for women today is that it leads to an affirmation of women's bonds and heritage.<sup>29</sup> Women are encouraged to value the Mother-daughter bond, whereas tradition has valued the Father-son relationship. Sisterhood is felt and strengthened.

One sees how Goddess imagery assists women to meet the pressing needs we have today, as discussed in chapter one. Self-respect is gained through the valuing of female power and the female body. The wise use of will is strengthened. Courage is provided as women increase our feelings of connectedness with Divinity and with each other.

The Goddess imagery may maintain many of the qualities one has come to associate with Divinity within Christianity. However, it is also possible to feel some tension between this particular image and the Christian tradition, since that tradition has been so anti-Goddess in its cultural manifestations. Carol Christ wrote, in 1980,

Like Rosemary Ruether, I am willing to acknowledge that Goddess symbolism comes to me (but not necessarily to other feminists) through the lens of my own Christian background and through Tillich's symbol of Ground of Being. . . But to be completely honest, I must also acknowledge that for me the symbol of Goddess is much different than anything I ever found in the Christian tradition.<sup>30</sup>

When I first met with the notion of Goddess as an

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 285.

<sup>30</sup>Carol Christ, "A Religion for Women: a Response to Rosemary Ruether Part II", Womanspirit, VII, 25 (Fall, 1980) 12.



image of Divinity, I was reluctant to give attention to it, partly out of fear of change, and partly because I did not know how that would affect my sense of being a Christian. The urge to pray to Goddess came to me at first when I felt particularly celebrative or acutely aware of my body, while running, for example. Now it is as natural to pray with the image, "Goddess," as with "God," though I notice myself doing so more often when I am particularly attentive to being a woman or aware of my body's cycles and potentials.

I realize that there is not within Christianity a tradition which supports the image, "Goddess." But I personally believe that to be true to the significant and dominant message of Jesus and the whole Christian tradition--liberation, justice and love--the willingness to begin to use Goddess imagery within the tradition is essential today.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>As Christianity incorporates Goddess imagery, there is bound to be diversity in how it is conceptualized. Beatrice Bruteau has suggested an interesting model for Divine imagery which is entirely feminine and is based upon the juxtaposition of Virgin and Mother. She arrived at this image out of primary concern for the "one-many" problem, that is, how there can be both separation and unity with Divinity. She believes that because the father was never one with the child, the Father image has tended to evoke ideas of a dominating parent who exacts obedience and is jealous of independence on the part of His creatures. She appreciates the panentheistic model in which "One manifests itself in the Many and indwells them." And she believes that the Mother image aligns with the panentheistic stance to provide an image which is at the same time transcendent and united with the child. The Virgin evokes images of the Transcendent Unity while the Mother calls forth the image of productive and nurturing love. Praying to Virgin Mother, thinking of that as Deity, with no connection with Mary, might elicit both affiliation, especially with the Mother aspect, and identification, with

There has been a Western tradition which has used Goddess imagery and which has persisted alongside Christianity throughout the centuries, namely Witchcraft. I turn to a brief description of the Goddess image in that tradition.

When we think of the Craft, we are likely to recall fantastic brutality and killing of especially women, in the witchhunts of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Or, when witches are called to our attention, we may think of those who ride on Halloween, or the bad witches in the Wizard of Oz, who are long-nosed, bent over caricatures with pointed hats. Or, we may think of positive caricatures with special powers, such as Glenda, in the Wizard of Oz. However, the name, "Witch," is a positive self-description for those who follow the ancient craft which worships the Mother Goddess.<sup>32</sup>

In the tradition of Witchcraft, the Goddess is the world, expressed through its diversity of forms. She is able to be known internally by each individual. The use of the image in Witchcraft does not legitimize the rule of one sex over the other, but rather elevates all aspects of life to a holy dimension. This includes the physical body and

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the autonomous power of the Virgin.

Beatrice Bruteau, "The Image of the Virgin-Mother," in Judith Plaskow and Joann Arnold Romero (eds.) Women and Religion (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974) 93-104.

<sup>32</sup>Starhawk, The Spiral Dance (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) 3.

all the natural aspects of life, growth, and death.<sup>33</sup>

Prayer is more accurately an attempt to feel and utilize Her power than it is to seek to bring about changes in Her response to a situation. Prayer, then, is a receptive form of communication, "hearing" Her life force in our own. Symbols, art, myth, poetry, music and rituals are used to elicit this receptivity on our part.<sup>34</sup> For example, one may say, as part of a ritual, speaking to the Goddess: "Bud in me, Blossom in me, Fruit in me."<sup>35</sup> Or, one may visualize the Goddess as forgiving Mother, imaging Her hands on one's own and Her voice as saying,

I am Mother of all things,  
My love is poured out upon the earth.  
I drink you in with perfect love,  
Be cleansed. Be healed. Be changed.<sup>36</sup>

It is probably clear how vividly this imagery evokes a healthy sense of power within women. The image of Divinity as female and the sense that She expresses through our physical bodies gives a very positive and forthright affirmation of women's bodies. Self-respect, then, is greatly aided with Goddess as a viable Divine image. In addition, the use of the will is recognized, appreciated, and strengthened, and the need for courage is underscored.

Starhawk explains:

To will does not mean that the world will conform to our desires--it means that we will: We will make our

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 78,79.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 118-119.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 117.

own choices and act so as to bring them about, even knowing we may fail. Feminist spirituality values the courage to take risks, to make mistakes, to be our own authorities.<sup>37</sup>

I find this understanding of the will to be realistic. It is less naively optimistic than some psychological approaches such as Psychosynthesis, which tend toward the expression of hope in "unlimited possibilities."

There is throughout Witchcraft, at least in its contemporary form, immense concern for social change. Starhawk comments that there are feminists who are politically active who fear that the Goddess religion will "sidetrack energy away from direct action to bring about social change."<sup>38</sup> She counters with the argument that it is only when the myths and symbols of our culture change that true social change is possible. "The symbol of the Goddess conveys the spiritual power both to challenge systems of oppression and to create new, life-oriented cultures."<sup>39</sup> I have been suggesting that the changes in symbols accompany and enable social change at the same time.

Although will, power, courage, and self-respect are sought after, Goddess worship is not a "looking out for Number One" philosophy.<sup>40</sup> Cooperation, not competition, is the model for the small group which worships together, for the family, and for society at large. The view is that we

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 30.

are interdependent and carry responsibility for our part in society. Starhawk expresses her view:

Much of reality--the welfare system, war, the social roles ordained for women and men--are created collectively and can only be changed collectively. One of the clearest insights of feminism is that our struggles are not just individual.<sup>41</sup>

Witchcraft has had a long experience with the image of Goddess. Those of us who are beginning to enjoy that image as a way of enlivening our faith and prayer can learn from that long tradition. We see how the image provides for identifying with as well as affiliation with Divinity when we pray. We see how "Goddess" triggers self-respect, the wise use of the will, courage, and an attempt for cooperation in women. I do not believe that it is mandatory that we worship in the Witchcraft tradition to value and to use the image of Goddess. The crucial test will probably be to what degree we are accepted and even encouraged to think of Divinity in expanded ways within the traditions which have become meaningful to us.

### Mary.

Mary has long been revered as the Mother of Jesus, the "mother of God." But she, being mother of God, was never "God the Mother." Instead, she was given a quasi-Divine status that has had more or less influence at different stages in Christian history. In the first four

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 194.

centuries Mary's importance grew until at the Council of Ephesus in 431, she was declared the "Mother of God." This declaration was so popular with the masses that there was an explosion of public joy throughout the town at the news. In 451, at the Council of Chalcedon, the two natures of Christ were formally reasserted, and the virgin was officially given the title, "ever-virgin." This was a "landmark" in the cult of Mary as the Mother of God.<sup>42</sup> "Mother of God" and the title officially given her much later, "Queen of Heaven" (in 1954), had been ancient titles for the Goddess.<sup>43</sup> Some of the ancient temples of the Earth Goddess were rededicated to Mary.

Veneration of Mary peaked between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, the precise time when real women were denigrated and over a million women who were labeled "witches" were burned. Mary became the giver of mercy and forgiveness in contrast to Christ's presiding at the final Judgement.<sup>44</sup> She became more human, more approachable, and supremely adorable. She was given the title, "Our Lady." She was like a mother, but loved humanity like a mistress.

However, the development of the doctrine of the immaculate conception and the antisexuality that emerged tended to blunt her symbolic power.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the ancient

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<sup>42</sup>Marina Warner, Alone of All Her Sex (New York: Knopf, 1976) 65.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 364. <sup>44</sup>Ruether, 52. <sup>45</sup>Ibid., 55.

Goddess, revered for her fecundity, Mary was elevated only in her unnatural "virgin" state.<sup>46</sup> Rather than "deepening the appreciation for the bipolarity of God's creation" the medieval cult of the Virgin "underlined the weakness, inferiority, and subordination of real females."<sup>47</sup> Not only was Mary isolated from all other real women, but also the roles and personality given to her by the Church supported the popular misogynism of the time.<sup>48</sup>

With the Reformation, mariology disappeared from Protestantism, but Roman Catholics are still strongly engaged in praying to Mary. The Rosary, which developed during the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries, based upon Mary's role as Mediator to God, is widely used today. When we think of the countries in the world which are primarily Roman Catholic, the ubiquitousness of Mary imagery is staggering.

Within Roman Catholicism, hearing people's prayers and presenting them to Jesus has been one of Mary's primary functions. She does not have the power, supposedly, to grant the answer to prayer itself, but only intercedes with her son. Using a distorted notion of power between mother

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<sup>46</sup>Rosemary Ruether, *Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church*, Religion and Sexism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974) 165.

<sup>47</sup>Eleanor Commo McLaughlin, "Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology," in *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

and son and a stereotypical "alluring" image of female to male, the explanation is that the son cannot refuse his mother, so he grants what she suggests. A very old Christian prayer, known from the late third to eighth centuries, shows her role:

We seek refuge under the protection of your mercies,  
oh Mother of God; do not reject our supplication in  
need but save us from perdition, oh you who alone are  
blessed.<sup>49</sup>

A male may find Mary appealing for different reasons. She can reinforce his ego by symbolizing women as passively dependent upon men--she is dependent upon a male God. The use of her in religious imagery can enable the male to experience the more passive side of himself.<sup>50</sup> Or, she can provide the male with an image with which he can meet some of his affiliative needs in prayer.

Mary's appeal to some women is as a model. Jungians like Ann Bellford Ulanov imply that Mary can be of value as an archetypal model for women because she represents in her various actions (and non-actions) the Mother type, the Hetaira type (submission without masochism), the Amazon type (as Virgin), and the Medial Woman (as intercessor and mediator).<sup>51</sup> Mary seems to me repressive as a model for women,

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<sup>49</sup> Warner, 287 see H. Graef, Mary, I: 48; Dom F. Mercenier, Le Muséon, 52(1939) 29-33.

<sup>50</sup> Reuther, New Women, 56.

<sup>51</sup> Ulanov, The Feminine (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971) 318-20.



if her function as mediator with the Father God is emphasized, for her value is seen only as she relates to a male. There is an opportunity for some empowerment from the Mary image if stress is placed upon the sense of Female Power. Unfortunately it is the former association as mediator to the Father and the Son which surrounds the Roman Catholic theological argument of Mary's function.

A positive usage of Mary symbolism today that some feminists suggest is that Mary's very virginity represents "female autonomy, her completeness and integrity in herself, apart from the male."<sup>52</sup> This function echoes one of the roles in Jungian thought. This emphasis upon her autonomy as virgin is quite in contrast to the image of Mary as Mediator, dependent upon the male to actualize power. I doubt that the positive implications of "virgin" can overcome the heavy weight of the "mediator" role assigned to Mary.

### God, She.

Although "Goddess" is the feminine term for which the masculine is "God," for many people "Goddess" is a bit too foreign a word. Since (in the conscious minds of many), "God" is not thought of as male, some feminists believe that a viable way to stay within the Judeo-Christian tradition and to experience empowerment as women is to think of and

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<sup>52</sup>Ruether, New Women, 36.

speak of God as "She."

Naomi Janowitz and Maggie Wenig offer their "world views" in the form of "commentary" on traditional Jewish texts. This is no different from the work of the Rabbis throughout the ages, they argue. Their commentary is meant to be prayed, not just read and studied. They view their translations as grounded in the belief that women, too, are created in the image of God, and thereby recipients of the "beauty, wisdom, and strength gained as the bearers of 4,000 years of tradition."<sup>53</sup>

I share one example of a translation in their commentary.

Baruch-She-Amar (Blessed is he who spoke)

Blessed is She who spoke and the world became.  
 Blessed is She who in the beginning, gave birth.  
 Blessed is She who says and performs.  
 Blessed is She who declares and fulfills.  
 Blessed is She whose womb covers the earth.  
 Blessed is She whose womb protects all creatures.  
 Blessed is She who nourished those who are in awe of Her.  
 Blessed is She who lives forever, and exists eternally.  
 Blessed is She who redeems and saves. Blessed is Her name.

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Ruler of the universe, G-d and Mother of the womb. Exalted in the mouth of Her people, praised and glorified by the tongue of Her pious ones and servants. With the songs of David and Miriam, your servants we will praise You. Lord our G-d with psalms and songs we will exalt, extol, and glorify You. We will call upon Your Name and proclaim You our Ruler, our G-d, the only One, the life of all worlds. Ruler lauded and praised, Your great Name will be forever and ever. Blessed are You Adonai, Ruler extolled with psalms of praise. ("G-d" is used because many Jews do

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<sup>53</sup>Naomi Janowitz and Maggie Wenig, "Sabbath Prayers for Women," in Christ and Plaskow, 174-175.

not write out the holy name).<sup>54</sup>

Rita Gross, also a Jewish Scholar, argues that we do need personal images for Divinity. She does not believe that the gender-free options are sufficiently personal, and she does not mention the "Goddess" option. She argues for referring to God sometimes as "He" and sometimes as "She." Gross explains:

Let me say immediately that I am quite aware that God is not really either female or male or anything in between . . . I am talking about the only thing we can talk about. . . images of God, not God.<sup>55</sup>

She adds:

If it is daring, degrading or alienating to speak of God using female pronouns and imagery, that perhaps indicates something about the way women and the feminine are valued . . . Therefore, we might say that the ultimate symbol of our degradation is our inability to say "God She."<sup>56</sup>

Rita Gross points out that if the pronoun for God, "She," is met with either hilarity or hostility, then it is an implication that women are met with those responses, too.<sup>57</sup>

Ntozake Shange demonstrates the explosive power of the feminine pronoun at the stirring conclusion of her choreopoem, "for colored girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf":

the sun wrapped me up swinging rose light everywhere

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 176.

<sup>55</sup>Rita Gross, "Female God Language in a Jewish Context," in Christ and Plaskow, 168.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 170.

the sky laid over me like a million men  
 i was cold/ i was burning up/ a child  
 & endlessly weavin garments for the moon  
 wit my tears

i found god in myself  
 & i loved her/ i loved her fiercely.<sup>58</sup>

A problem I have with the "God, She" model is that, for its usage, it requires speaking of Divinity in the third person. That is fine when we speak to an individual about our experience with Divinity, as Shange does. But in prayer we communicate directly to and with the Deity, in second person. If we continue to use only "God" in our prayers, as we address Divinity, I am not convinced that our thinking will shift from the thoroughly engrained male images. Goddess, addressed in prayer, forces the one who prays to think feminine.

#### GENDER-FULL IMAGES OF DIVINITY

Our Father-Mother God, all-harmonious,  
 Adorable One.  
 Thy kingdom is come; Thou art ever-present,  
 Enable us to know, --as in heaven, so on earth, --God  
 is omnipotent, supreme.  
 Give us grace for to-day; feed the famished affections;  
 And Love is reflected in love;  
 And God leadeth us not into temptation, but delivereth  
 us from sin, disease, and death.  
 For God is infinite, all-power, all Life, Truth, Love,  
 over all, and All.  
 (Mary Baker Eddy's expression of the spiritual  
 sense of the Lord's Prayer.)<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Ntozake Shange, for colored girls who have considered suicide (New York: Bantam Books, 1975) 67.

<sup>59</sup>Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures (Boston: Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1875, 1934) 16-17.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, while others were satisfied with obtaining the vote for women, Elizabeth Cady Stanton expressed a then-outrageous opinion:

The first step in the elevation of woman to her true position, as an equal factor in human progress, is the cultivation of the religious sentiment in regard to her dignity and equality, the recognition by the rising generation of an ideal Heavenly Mother, to whom their prayers should be addressed, as well as to a Father.<sup>60</sup>

Stanton, the author of The Women's Bible, has voiced in this excerpt another option for an image of Divinity. An image can be gender-full. It can be androgynous in form; it can picture a male and female together; it can include a combination of three or four elements which suggest both the masculine and feminine.

#### Gender-Full Terms in Scriptures.

And God (Elohim) said, 'Let us make humanity (adam) in our own image, in the image of himself, in the image of God (Elohim) he created it, male and female he created them' --Genesis 1:26-27.

The Bible itself uses several gender-full metaphors. Over eighty years ago Elizabeth Cady Stanton reminded people that in the creation story, Genesis 1:27, there is an equal position given to both woman and man and both were created in the image of Deity, that is, "the Heavenly Mother and Father."<sup>61</sup> Phyllis Tribble explains the meaning of this passage using rhetorical criticism, a special form of

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<sup>60</sup>Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Woman's Bible (Seattle: Coalition Task Force on Women and Religion, 1974) 14.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 21.

literary criticism, in her book, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality.<sup>62</sup>

She starts the study of Genesis 1:27 by showing a parallelism between the phrases "in the image of God" and "male and female." The lesser known is compared with the better known. She then explains the words used. Looking at the shifts from singular to plural, she concludes that from the beginning humankind is said to exist as two creatures, not as one androgynous being. She proceeds with the observation that no description of Deity actually appears, but some hint of the Creator is given through the phrase, "Image of God."

God is neither male nor female, nor a combination of the two. And yet, detecting divine transcendence in human reality requires human clues. Unique among them, according to our poem, is sexuality. God creates, in the image of God, male and female.<sup>63</sup>

The plural form of Elohim, combined with this analysis, gives some justification for Biblical imagery which is indeed gender-full when speaking of Divinity.

Elaine Pagels calls our attention to one significant difference between the recently discovered Gnostic Gospels and the orthodox ones which made it into the New Testament canon. The "heretical" ones contain many descriptions of the Deity in bisexual language.<sup>64</sup> There are three charac-

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<sup>62</sup>Phyllis Tribble, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978) 8.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 17-20.

<sup>64</sup>Pagels, 49.

terizations of the Divine Mother in Gnostic texts which have been discovered: as part of a Dyad, as Holy Spirit within the Trinity, and as Wisdom.<sup>65</sup>

Those Gnostics which used the dyadic images did not always agree as to its meaning. Some actually thought the Deity could be considered as a "great male-female power." A second group preferred to see this only as a metaphor, since Divinity is in reality neither male nor female. Still others opted for speaking of Divinity in either masculine or feminine terms, according to which aspect of Divinity needed stress at that moment.<sup>66</sup>

The Gnostic poet and teacher, Valentinus, believed the Deity to be indescribable, but he imagined a dyad which consisted of one aspect which was thought of as Ineffable, the Depth, the Primal Father and another aspect which was conceived as Grace, Silence, Womb, "Mother of the All."<sup>67</sup>

There are a number of exciting examples of the usage of Mother as Spirit, some in conjunction with the Trinity, in which the Father is the Creator God, and the Son, Christ. In the Gospel to the Hebrews Jesus is quoted as saying: "my Mother, the Spirit."<sup>68</sup> In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus again speaks of his divine Mother, the Holy Spirit. And, in the Gospel of Philip, he says that "whoever becomes a Christian gains 'both father and mother' for the Spirit (ruah)

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 50-55.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 50

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 52.

is "Mother of many."<sup>69</sup>

A vision of the Trinity is seen by John in the  
Apocryphon of John:

the (heavens were opened and the whole) creation (which is) under heaven shone and (the world) trembled. (And I was afraid, and I) saw in the light. . . as likeness with multiple forms. . . and the likeness had three forms. . . He said to me, 'John, Jo(h)n, why do you doubt, and why are you afraid? . . . I am the one who (is with you) always. I (am the Father); I am the Mother, I am the Son.'<sup>70</sup>

Examples of the way in which Wisdom was described as female were cited in the section, "Primarily Feminine Imagery."

Bishop Iraneus, Tertullian, and other Church "Fathers" were outraged at the imagery and the high level of participation of women in these groups of Gnostic Christians. There were those like Clement who did appreciate the feminine element in Divinity and greater participation of women in churches. But, in spite of Jesus' own openness toward women, there developed in the "orthodox" Christian church a restriction of the participation of women, a more limited set of metaphors for Divinity, and a canon which was culled of the more gender-full imagery options.<sup>71</sup> Christians were encouraged to pray exclusively to God the Father, through Christ the Son. Concepts of a Mother-Father Deity, of Mother as an aspect of Trinity, of Feminine Spirit as an aspect of a Masculine God, and as Feminine Wisdom as an

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 51-52. <sup>71</sup>Ibid., 65-69.



aspect accompanying a Masculine God were all quelled.

Androgyne: Christ--The Mother.

I skip through centuries to look at Dame Julian of Norwich, who typifies in her spirituality a unique and paradoxical gender-full imagery option: "Christ our Mother."<sup>72</sup> The prayer which follows is hardly helpful for increasing one's self-respect. It does show the human need for dependence, and it shows how one woman sought to create a gender-full image out of the masculine ones provided her by the Christian Church. Here she speaks of Mother Jesus:

My kind Mother, my gracious Mother, my most dear Mother, have mercy on me. I have made myself foul and unlike to thee; and I cannot or may not amend it but with thy help and grace...<sup>73</sup>

In a vision which Julian of Norwich saw at thirty years of age, the Trinity is shown, full of sex genders:

And then I saw that God rejoices that he is our Father; and God rejoices that he is our Mother; and God rejoices that he is our true Spouse, and that our soul is his beloved wife. And Christ rejoices that he is our Brother; and Jesus rejoices that he is our Savior. These are five high joys...

And thus, in our making, God almighty is our kindly Father; and God all-wisdom is our kindly Mother, with the love and goodness of the Holy Ghost; which is all one God, one Lord...

Thus Jesus Christ, who does good against evil, is our

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<sup>72</sup>Clark and Richardson, 104 (her life was 1342--approx. 1414).

<sup>73</sup>Dame Julian of Norwich, "The Revelations of Divine Love," trans. James Walsh (New York: Harper & Bros., 1961) as cited in Clark and Richardson, 112.

very Mother. We have our being of him, there, where the ground of Motherhood begins; with all the sweet keeping of love that endlessly follows. As truly as God is our Father, so truly is God our Mother.<sup>74</sup>

As I read Julian of Norwich and some of the visions of other mystics, I see evidence of some need in the human spirit for identification with Divinity as well as affiliation. The logic of the images does not always need to make sense; the alogical images speak to the hungry soul.

#### Quaternity--through Jungian Eyes.

That Jung believed the feminine was not sufficiently included in Christian symbolism is well known. He tried several ways to include this element into Christial symbols. He tried to expand the Christ symbol, speaking of Christ as androgynous. (Since he wanted Christ to be the archetype of the Self, he needed that image to be both feminine and masculine.) He also posited the value of a higher view of Mary. The mere veneration of Mary was not sufficient, he thought, to compensate for the lack of the feminine principle in the Trinity.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, he considered the Doctrine of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven "the most important religious event since the Reformation."<sup>76</sup> He realized that

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>75</sup>Carl Jung, "Psychology and Alchemy," in his Collected Works (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2nd ed., 1968) XII, 22-23.

<sup>76</sup>Carl Jung, Answer to Job (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958) 102.

Mary was in no way given the status of Goddess; however, since she is "functionally on a par with Christ," as mediator, "her position satisfies the need of the archetype."<sup>77</sup> The heavenly Mary, not quite in the Trinity, at least gave Christians some feminine symbol which neared Divinity.

Jung's most conscientious effort to include feminine symbolism alongside the masculine in Christianity was to expand the Trinity to a Quaternity. He argued that the Trinity was decidedly masculine, not only because its persons were, but also because "since olden times, not only in the West but also in China, uneven numbers have been regarded as masculine and even numbers as feminine."<sup>78</sup> This lack of the feminine Jung considered a hindrance for both females and males, for neither had a complete set of symbolic references in Divinity. However, Jung proceeded to identify the feminine with evil, mystery, and the unconscious. The primary purpose of his book, Answer to Job, is to critique Christianity's lack of acceptance of "evil" or "mystery" into Divinity itself. (We do see it accepted in Witchcraft and in Hinduism.) The Job of the Old Testament, Jung believes, (I think somewhat tongue in cheek) did see the necessity of evil in the Godhead. Job was in this sense superior to God at that point, Jung suggests.<sup>79</sup> "The Christian Deity is one

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>78</sup>Jung, "Psychology and Alchemy," XII, 22.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

in three persons," says Jung in his Collected Works, "The fourth person in the heavenly drama is undoubtedly the devil."<sup>80</sup> It is a dubious honor to be included by way of sexual metaphor into the Quaternity of the Godhead, if that inclusion also means identification with the unconscious, mysterious, and evil side.<sup>81</sup> It is remarkable, however, how many Jungians seem oblivious to this artificial male-biased way of seeing.

As might be imagined, given the long history and great diversity of peoples, Jung was not the first to suggest a quaternity. In the male dominated Jewish mysticism which used the medieval Kabbala, there was talk of a Divine Quaternity. This consisted of the Divine Mother and Father and the Son and Daughter.<sup>82</sup> What a rich array of images that could provide for us as we pray!

#### Female and Male Combined in One Image of Deity.

Divine Couple, I accept now Your guidance for me as I relate to \_\_\_\_\_. I rejoice and give thanks for the privilege of being together. May I be open to the deepest of joys, now and in the future, without reservations. May we be open to Your wisdom on each level of our interactions. May I grow and enable \_\_\_\_\_ to grow. May I know when and how to challenges \_\_\_\_\_, and may I accept (his) challenged in ways which will help my growth. I seek to be responsible as an individual, not too dependent, yet able to lean healthfully.

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., XII, 151.

<sup>81</sup>Ulanov, 318-319.

<sup>82</sup>Swidler, 56.

I want for us as a couple to be socially responsible.  
May we be guided in how we share our time, our monies,  
our energies with others and our community.

At the opening of this section on "Gender-Full Imagery" there is a citation of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's affirmation of Mother God along with Father God. This, or the notion of a Father-Mother God, has been repeated in numerous forms, undergirded by a variety of theologies. Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy, probably is the best know contemporary Western religious denomination which uses a gender-full title.

Mary Daly points out that if "bisexual imagery" emerges as a healthy symbol for Divinity, she would hope that it be less hierarchical than that which is implied in parental images. In 1971 she posited that there may be, in the future, a new Christ and a new Mary.<sup>83</sup> However, I doubt that, given Daly's movement in thought during the past decade, she would still offer those images as suggestions for the future. Other feminists, myself included, agree that we need to reduce our hierarchical notions of Divinity. Neither Mother nor Father help to accomplish this. Both of these images lead one to divest authority to Deity with the possibility of too much irresponsible dependence. These images also evoke a sense of power-over rather than the more mature notion of power-with.

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<sup>83</sup>Mary Daly, "After the Death of God the Father: Women's Liberation and the Transformation of Christian Consciousness," in Christ and Plaskow, 59.

Patricia Wilson has suggested a gender-full image which is new for Christianity, but is well used in Hinduism --the male and female in mature relationship to each other. The image is not of an androgyne. Neither is it given parental emphasis, as with Mother-Father, but the image is simply one of adult female and male in interaction. The prayer at the beginning of this sub-section shows such an image. She argues that the male-female relationship enables humans to transcend ourselves on many different dimensions at the same time (i.e., physically, intellectually, emotionally). Other relationships can offer opportunities for some transcendence in some dimensions, as in mother or father love for child, but these are not as expansive as the mature non-hierarchical image of friends and lovers. Intimacy and vulnerability are present in this model; therefore, there is abundant potential for growth, mutual support and understanding. This model is multi-dimensional, cooperative rather than hierarchical, and provides for flexible role-interpretations for humans.<sup>84</sup>

I testify to the value of this option. While I was participating in a Roman Catholic Mass recently, I found myself feeling alienated from the imagery which was being used, and I began to pray silently in my own way, while the congregational prayers were being said. I was thinking particularly about my relationship with my husband. Suddenly

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<sup>84</sup>Patricia Wilson, 'Feminine Imagery in an Analogue for God,' in Plaskow and Romero, 21-29.

I thought it appropriate to speak to Divinity as a Couple, not in their parental roles, but as a Couple who have related to each other for a very very long time. A joyous and private laugh came over me. To be open to guidance from Divinity which was, for a moment, conceived as being a Divine Couple, was both delightful and helpful. There was power, wisdom, and courage evoked in that small event, triggered by internal permission to see Divinity differently.

#### GENDER-FREE IMAGES OF DIVINITY

Giver of love, we turn from you. When we love a suffering world as you love, we suffer as you suffer. We cannot endure the morning paper without hardening our hearts. Even the pain of our nearest neighbor is too much for us.

Giver of truth, we fear you. We cling to the images by which we have lived. They have not made us happy, but they are familiar, and we have grown accustomed to our unhappiness. What you offer us would make our easy habits seem wrong. Even the ideals in which we pride ourselves might appear inadequate.

Giver of hope, your gift seems to us most threatening of all. If we hope, we will be called to try new ways, to engage ourselves in the complexities of the world, to join with others in efforts whose outcome we cannot foresee and control. All may be in vain, based on deception, an exercise in futility. And we may appear foolish to the wise of the world.

Giver of life, break through our resistance and our refusal. Do not let us close ourselves to you. Enable us to trust you. Give us the love from which we turn, the truth we fear, and the hope that is most threatening of all. --by John Cobb, Jr.<sup>85</sup>

Our language is going through change with respect

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<sup>85</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr., "Christ Our Life," in Meditations for the Seventies by the faculty, students, and administrators of the School of Theology at Claremont, 1976, 20.

to gender. This is not a new phenomenon, as linguists point out, but it is occurring with particular obviousness today. Casey Miller and Kate Swift discuss the argument between those who seek more gender-free terms and those who prefer the status quo, naming people in general, and many things, including Deity, with masculine pronouns:

This is the crux of the argument between those who, in their efforts to take gender out of linguistic symbols for social realities that are not exclusively the province of either sex, offend those others who find neology repugnant both to the ear and to their sense of natural order. The latter see the question as one of aesthetics, the former as one of accuracy and politics.<sup>86</sup>

When we refer to the Deity in gender-free terms we are not only making a political statement, for equality between the sexes, we are also making an attempt to be congruent to the Judeo-Christian tradition which has consistently affirmed in theory that Deity is beyond gender. In addition, we are making possible for individuals whole new ways of understanding and experiencing Divinity.

There are an abundant array of options for terms which elicit gender-free images of Divinity. One attempt at freedom from gender is used by the author of The Word for Us, Joann Haugerud. She uses no pronoun or metaphors for God whatsoever in her translations. There are no lords, fathers, kings, or kingdoms, but the word, "God" is retained, as if it were gender-free, rather than masculine.

John 5:18 provides a good example of the difference

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<sup>86</sup>Miller and Swift, 126.



which her translation makes:

New English: This made the Jews still more determined to kill him, because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but, by calling God his own Father, he claimed equality with God.

Word for Us: This was why the Judeans sought all the more to kill Jesus, because he not only broke the Sabbath but also claimed to be descended from God, making himself equal with God.<sup>87</sup>

This translation, Haugerud explains, is truer to the original meaning of fatherhood, which meant "ancestry, culture..." "Father" just does not connote that in our culture, she argues.<sup>88</sup>

In public worship when I speak of the Deity in third person, I use this method most of the time. However, this method is not satisfactory once one realizes that "God" itself is masculine, as compared to "Goddess." To say "God" again and again, with no pronoun, reduces the reinforcement of masculine images alongside the word "God," but it does not seek to elicit new images.

Carol Ochs seeks to achieve a gender-free image of Divinity by taking a monistic theistic stance. After analyzing some of the implications of feminine and masculine imagery in her book, Behind the Sex of God, she concludes that even the androgynous solution is not satisfactory, for when thinking of an androgyne, one still is making

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<sup>87</sup>Joann Haugerud, The Word for Us (Seattle: Coalition of Women and Religion, 1977) 10.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, iii.

distinctions, contradictions, and dualities.<sup>89</sup> Her wrestling is one which is familiar to this research: it is the question of the transcendent or immanent nature of Divinity. She rejects what she indicates theologians have clung to, that is, a God which is "other."<sup>90</sup> Her position is

that God is not apart from, separate from, or other than this reality. We, all together, are part of the whole, the All in All. God is not father, nor mother, nor even parents, because God is not other than, distinct from, or opposed to creation.<sup>91</sup>

In a short paragraph entitled "Transcendent vs. Immanent" she indicates that in her position the Deity is in the world but is more than the world. She does not reduce the Deity to the natural world, but sees this world as divine.<sup>92</sup> In seeing the problem as one of immanent versus transcendent, Ochs has not realized the panentheistic option. Carol Christ, appreciator of the Goddess, seeks to avoid any "new monism" but seeks an "integrated view in which the differences are not viewed in hierarchical and oppositional ways."<sup>93</sup> I find this to be the most viable option of feminism, as well as being also the most conducive to the understanding of prayer as a two-way communication with Divinity.

Attempting to maintain both immanence and tran-

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<sup>89</sup>Carol Ochs, Behind the Sex of God (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977) 129.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 136.      <sup>91</sup>Ibid., 137      <sup>92</sup>Ibid., 137.

<sup>93</sup>Carol Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980) 129.

scendence, Paul Tillich speaks in a gender-free way, using the terms, "Ground of Being," or "Being Itself" for Divinity. Daly appreciated Tillich's terms in her 1971 article, because they "would be very difficult to use for legitimation of any sort of oppression."<sup>94</sup> Tillich himself speaks of sexist images of Divinity and conveys his expectation that "Ground of Being" goes beyond that. He explains that this image points symbolically to "the mother-quality of giving birth, carrying, and embracing, and, at the same time, of calling back, resisting independence of the created, and swallowing it."<sup>95</sup> Seeing the Deity as "the power of being in all being" is an attempt by Tillich to reduce the pre-dominance of male symbolization of the Deity.<sup>96</sup>

I find that it is natural and easy to pray "Source of our Being, we know you undergird our every decision..." or "Divine Being who moves in and through us, we acknowledge your presence and power within and beyond us. We open to you. We are receptive and willing to cooperate with you. Guide us as we choose our actions..." Tillich frequently uses the term, "Spiritual Presence," and he believes that

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<sup>94</sup>Mary Daly, "After the Death...", 57. Other feminist writers speak of Tillich's symbol system, too, such as Joan Arnold Romero, "The protestant Principle: A Woman's-Eye View of Barth and Tillich," in Ruether, Religion and Sexism, 329-337.

<sup>95</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) III, 293-294.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., III, 294.

the ecstatic nature of that image transcends the male-female symbolism.<sup>97</sup> I use "Spiritual Presence" frequently now in public prayers and occasionally when I speak of the Deity in third person, for I find that of the gender-free options, it elicits for me a greater sense of presence and movement, and it evokes a sense of affiliation.

Recall that Tillich has an appreciation of the dynamic nature of symbols. He recognizes that they are indeed born, mature, and die. It is not easy to give birth to meaningful symbols which can evoke ecstatic encounter, but it occurs when there is a need which is sufficiently urgent and when the old symbols no longer function adequately. This is precisely what is the case in prayer for so many women and men today.

Another theological alternative, providing a gender-free image, is to think of the Deity as a verb. Daly writes: "Why indeed must 'God' be a noun? Why not a verb--the most active and dynamic of all?. . . isn't the Verb infinitely more personal than a mere static noun?"<sup>98</sup> The Verb "To Be" is intransitive; therefore, it need not be considered merely "other." It connotes the sense of participation in being.<sup>99</sup> Clearly Daly was influenced by Tillich,

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) 33.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 34.

and I see no reason why Tillich's understanding of Divinity cannot be thought of as a Verb, for indeed he wants above all for Divinity to be seen not as "a being" but as the "Ground of Being," which could be thought of as the verb, "To Be." Linguistically, it is more difficult to address a prayer to a "Verb," for the very notion of the subject-object implies a being. To conceive of Deity as Verb would seem to require a style of prayer other than discursive. Silence, imagery, and action prayer may be entered into with the concept of oneself as given movement and a state of being by Divinity. Wrestling with the linguistic problem actually enables one to grasp Tillich's view of ecstatic encounter, for in his view the subject-object distinction is transcended.

In addition to repeating "God" without pronouns, the monistic solutions, the suggestions of Tillich, and the image of God as Verb, there are various other options for gender-free images. For some, these gender-free options are at first too abstract to use in prayer. However, with familiarity, they tend to become more personal.

Some of these terms are Biblical: Light, Love, Truth, Creator, Reconciler, Servant. (Wisdom and Spirit were originally feminine, but most people would not have that association today.) One can speak as John Cobb did, in the example at the beginning of this section, combining a Biblical image with "Giver," to say, "Giver of love," or "Giver of truth."

The Methodist hymnal offers the suggestion, "Author"

in the hymn, "Author of Life Divine."<sup>100</sup> Those in the Jewish mysticism tradition of the Kabbala sometimes spoke of the Deity as "It."<sup>101</sup> If one chooses to continue to refer to the Deity as "God," then attention can be given to saying, "It" or "It's" rather than "He" or "His," when reference is made without repeating the antecedent.

John Cobb, in a sermon delivered to the Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu, reflected upon male imagery for Divinity and considered the image of Mother Goddess. He then turned to a poetic expression upon which the title of the sermon was based, that is, "The Cry." He alludes to Kazantzakis'

Blowing through heaven and earth, in our hearts and  
the heart of every living thing, is a gigantic breath--  
a great Cry--which we call God.<sup>102</sup>

Cobb combined this metaphor with Whitehead's affirmation of "the tender elements of the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love."<sup>103</sup> "The Cry grounds our hope."<sup>104</sup> Certainly "The Cry" is not an image which would come to mind when most people are beginning to pray, although I under-

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<sup>100</sup>The Methodist Hymnal, #315.

<sup>101</sup>Lederer, 157.

<sup>102</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr. Liberal Christianity at the Crossroads (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972) 48 from Kazantzakis Report to Greco (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965) 291-292.

<sup>103</sup>Cobb, *Ibid.*, 48-49, from Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 129) 520.

<sup>104</sup>Cobb, *Ibid.*, 49.

stand that in the Spanish speaking culture, this is a fairly common way to refer to the call of the Deity. After hearing a sermon in which "The Cry" was offered as an image, perhaps it would become a viable symbol for some. And, as important, it would give those who heard it internal permission to be open to their own images of Divinity.

Valentinus used the name, "Silence"<sup>105</sup>; Schleiermacher used, "Ruler"<sup>106</sup>; Starhawk used the term, "All."<sup>107</sup> Each of these is gender-free. Other possibilities are: "Supreme Intelligence," "Life-Giver," "Redeemer," "Liberator," "Eternal One," "Oh Holy One," "Source of our Being," "Ultimate One," "Creator and Nurturer," and "Light Within."

Once we begin to expand our imagery for Divinity, we do find terms which are particularly appropriate for us as we pray. In so doing we may also become more theologically congruent and psychologically healthy.

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<sup>105</sup>Pagels, 50.

<sup>106</sup>Friederich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1928) 106.

<sup>107</sup>Starhawk, 26.

## CHAPTER 5

## REPORT ON "PRAYER EMPOWERMENT GROUPS"

In order to test my theoretical position, one needs to see how people are affected by using the expanded styles of prayer and images of Divinity which I have suggested. The people whom I could depend upon to work with in research were from various nearby local churches. These people were not already aware of the prayer options. Therefore, I decided first to share the material, then, depending upon how they began to use diverse styles and images, I would have an opportunity to see the effects. Provided that people really practiced alternative images and styles, my hypothesis was that women would sense more power, responsible use of the will, and courage, as they met their identifying needs with Divinity more successfully. Also, I supposed that if men practiced alternate styles and images, they would more adequately meet their affiliative needs with Divinity, tolerating dependency more and feeling closer with Divinity. An idea which I hold, but which is far beyond empirical research, is that as males reduce their identification with a masculine divine power and are more accepting of their dependency needs, and as females recognize and live out of our own healthful power sources and balance independence with dependence, males and females would



benefit. There would be healthier and more responsible relationships between people and between people and Divinity.

The empirical study was severely limited by time, money, and the small number of available participants. In order to reach diverse people, I asked that advertisements for "Prayer Empowerment Groups" be placed in the newsletters of the following churches in San Diego: First Lutheran, First United Methodist, Mission Hills First Congregational, St. Vincent's Roman Catholic, Pacific Beach United Methodist, Point Loma United Methodist, St. Marks' United Methodist, as well as the church which I serve, Mission Hills United Methodist. Additionally, notices were placed in the newsletters of the San Diego Ecumenical Conference and the San Diego District United Methodist Churches. (See Advertisements, Appendix C.)

The stated purpose of the groups was: "To develop a more effective prayer life, through conscious reflection upon our prayers." I did not mention feminist concerns in the advertisements.

My design was to have two control groups and two experimental groups. In the experimental groups, I would share the five types of prayer styles and the four major categories of images for Divinity. In the control groups, there would be discussion about various aspects of prayer, but not anything directly related to that which was discussed in the experimental group. I had hoped to be able to group the people according to ages, within a fifteen year

span, but that became impossible. I took the volunteers as they contacted me and reduced the number of groups to two--one experimental and one control. Basically, the volunteers placed themselves into the groups according to the group time which was more convenient for them. I made only one switch for the sake of balance in the groups. That was to ask one man to move to the Monday group when it was clear that would make two men in each group. There were only two people who were related to each other in the groups, a wife and husband. They were in separate groups and promised not to disclose anything about their particular group with the other.

The control group, Group I, which met on Sundays, comprised eleven people. There were thirteen in the experimental group, Group II, which met on Mondays. Group I consisted of seven United Methodists from Mission Hills, one United Methodist from Pacific Beach, one United Methodist from First Church, and two Congregationalists from Mission Hills. Group II was composed of seven from Mission Hills United Methodist, two from Pacific Beach United Methodist, and one each from the Pt. Loma United Methodist, La Jolla Presbyterian, Mission Hills Congregational, and St. Vincent's Roman Catholic churches.

The average ages were close: Group I---52.8 years, Group II--54.2 years. However, the spread was different. The members of Group I spanned six decades. The youngest was in her early twenties and the oldest in her mid-

seventies, and there was someone in each decade. Group II consisted of those between their early thirties and mid-seventies, with no one in their forties. The median age in each group was sixty years. In Group I the men were twenty-six and fifty-five, while in Group II they were thirty-eight and sixty-three. These statistics are shown in Table 1. It should be noted that all the people in the groups were active in churches, many were my own church members, and all were sufficiently interested in prayer to join a group which focused upon that topic. I mentioned nothing about feminist concerns in my advertisement, and I doubt that people were aware there would be a concern for feminist perspectives when they enlisted. There were two people whom I believe had some identification with feminist concerns when they enrolled in the groups. These were both women, thirty and thirty-four, and both joined the experimental group.

TABLE 1  
ANALYSIS OF AGES IN GROUPS

Group I	Group II
Avg. age, based on 11-52.8 yrs.	Avg. age, based on 13-54.2 yrs.
Median=60 years.	Median= 60 years.
High and Low: 76 yrs.& 23 yrs.	High and Low: 76 yrs.& 30 yrs.
2 in 20's	4 in 30's
1 in 30's	1 in 50's
1 in 40's	7 in 60's
1 in 50's	1 in 70's
4 in 60's	
2 in 70's	

The people in both groups came together the Saturday before the groups started to respond to the first questionnaire. (See Appendix D.) They were told that they would be asked to answer a questionnaire upon the conclusion of the group and once again three months later.

The methodology for each group was the same. I passed out a paper with information upon which we would reflect for about forty-five minutes. Sometimes we read these sheets aloud. Other times we glanced over them privately, then discussed the ideas as a group. The remainder of the session was devoted to the practice of prayer and feedback within the group to share our experience in the prayer time.

Group I, the control group, from the first session until the last was rather relaxed and chatty. The members were in general quite faithful in keeping their prayer logs, which I had requested they keep, but they were not as faithful in attendance, even though I had stressed that one could only be in the group if one knew she or he could attend every meeting. (I made a few exceptions for a very few people who knew they would have to miss only one time.) These people did tend to know each other better, and most of them were talkative. I believe that they sensed the logs were important to me, perhaps because the material we discussed was clearly not controversial. I was more at ease with this group, partly because I did not have such investment in the outcome. There was more group partici-

pation in planning how the group spent its time.

The second set of people had some complicated group dynamics which were apparent from the very start and persisted throughout the seven weeks. Two people were exceptionally quiet. Each spoke perhaps twice the entire seven weeks. In contrast, two others were extremely verbal, making comments many times each evening. A few times I called this unbalanced talkativeness to the group's attention, but there was never a resolution. In addition, the two men were notably quiet as well. They spoke almost every evening, but often only when asked for a response and never in great length. The opinions of one man, I observed, carried a great deal of weight. We had waited so long to hear from the men that when one spoke there was special attention given to his words. This is clearly a problem with such an uneven distribution of males and females. And the attentiveness probably also shows the greater value women tend to have of men's opinions.

The experimental group was amazingly punctual and consistent in attendance. Virtually every member was present at each session. I believe that they sensed how vital the group was, for themselves and for me. They tended to know each other less and to be less sociable before and after the sessions.

The topics which we covered in each group appear in Tables 2 and 3 below. The sheets which were distributed are included in Appendices E for Group I, and F for Group II.

TABLE 2

WEEKLY AGENDA FOR GROUP I  
(Planned as we progressed)  
Control Group

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Sundays, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

- Week 1: "Prayer Empowerment Group" explanation sheet; Definition of prayer; Instruction on keeping logs; Introductions of one another; Time of verbal prayer.
- Week 2: "Receptivity in Prayer" sheet; Practice prayer in a posture which is different than usual, in silence, focusing upon receptivity--15 min.
- Week 3: "Insights from Rollo May" sheet; Lay hands on two people, chosen to sit in the center.
- Week 4: Discuss John Cobb, Jr.'s "To Pray or Not to Pray" booklet, which was distributed the prior week; Pray together in only a "thankful" mood, not asking.
- Week 5: Shared our own turning points with prayer, similar to Cobb, in his book; Brought written prayers which had been meaningful to us, to share with one another.
- Week 6: "Active, Directive Intercessory Prayer" sheet; Discussion of Process Theology and prayer; Pray in a circle, naming a thing or person for prayer, as others pray individually for those concerns, non-verbally.
- Week 7: Passed out copies of the written prayers which were brought for sharing; Reflection upon the group.

TABLE 3

WEEKLY AGENDA FOR GROUP II  
(Planned in Advance, altered slightly)  
Experimental Group

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Mondays, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

- Week 1: "Prayer Empowerment Group" explanation sheet; Definition of prayer, "Verbal Prayer" sheet; Log-keeping explanation; Introductions of one another; Time for verbal prayer.
- Week 2: "Imagery Prayer" and "Gender-Free Images of Divinity" sheets; Prayer imaging the "Spirit of Love" (a gender-free image) first in our bodies, then in the group, then in places of concern around the world, especially Atlanta, Georgia.
- Week 3: "Masculine Images of Divinity" sheet; Silent, internal dialogues with persons in Scripture, using imagery.
- Week 4: "Silence as Prayer" and "Feminine Images of Divinity" sheets; Practice "Disciplined Silence" for five minutes and "Waiting Silence" for ten minutes.
- Week 5: "Action as Prayer" and "Gender-Full Images of Divinity" sheets; Practice imagery relating to spots on earth.
- Week 6: "Repetitious Words/Phrases Used in Prayer" sheet; Repeated "Peace on Earth," then added location; Shared turning points in our prayer lives.
- Week 7: "Mary" sheet and "Bibliography" (which was requested); Feedback on the group; Closing prayer, verbally.

During the last session of each group, we took time to fill out the questionnaire for a second time. Each group decided that I should mail the questionnaire to the members in three months, rather than to meet again to fill it out. One woman in the control group did not complete either the second or third questionnaires. I therefore computed the statistics which follow as if there were ten people in that group, and I do not include her first questionnaire responses in the statistics.

The hypotheses about identification and affiliation with Divinity are only able to be tested if people actually use the expanded styles and images, and few of the people did that to a significant degree during the span of the group, or in the few months thereafter. There is some statistically relevant material, however.

Because the groups consisted of relatively older people, all of whom were fairly comfortable in their churches and with their beliefs, there was only minimal felt need for change or expansion of styles of prayer and images for Divinity. Even so, there was not expressed hostility towards the suggestions for expanding notions of prayer. Though, of course, there was quite a bit of resistance.

I am aware that my age, my being the minister of the majority of the people in each group, and my asking for assistance to help me with a dissertation were factors in the group dynamics. It is possible that the twenty-seven year differential between my age and the average age in each



group caused me to be seen as in a different generation, raising concerns which were not always seen as relevant to the older generation. However, I perceived a great deal of serious response in the experimental group. The fact that I was a minister and the minister of many of the members probably increased the credence given what I had to say and decreased the willingness to speak in opposition to my views. The fact that I was writing a dissertation influenced the situation primarily by fostering a sense of importance to the endeavor. For some there was not much personal investment in the study; they saw themselves primarily as helping me.

#### HIGHLIGHTS OF GROUP COMMENTS

These observations were culled from the logs which members kept and from the notes which I took as I listened to the tape-recordings of each group session.

##### Group I--Control.

During the first session one member responded that she thought being in any group for seven weeks would lead to change for the individuals. Another group member expressed numerous times how good it felt to be prayed for by other members in his presence.

The second session brought a request from one member to pray for a personal family matter. The group moved much closer emotionally. A member shared during the third

session that she felt almost guilty if she did not pray for each person on her prayer list (which is exceptionally long). She was realizing that she felt that the loved one would almost not make it through the day without her prayer. She said, "That belittles God."

There was considerable interest in sharing prayers which were entirely thankful, not asking for anything. This was somewhat influenced by Schleiermacher's ideas. In the sixth session a member had the impulse (which she did not follow) to name herself when the group named people and places for prayer.

The logs of this group consisted of many "thank you" prayers and short prayers, along with a good dose of prayers beginning with "help me." Early on, for a couple members, there was a heightened questioning during the daily activities: "Is this prayer?" Attention to prayer was growing. One member sang and prayed while riding his bike, which was a significant time each day. He also imaged the Holy Spirit as bright light, surrounding a loved one. (We had not discussed this option.) An individual entered into a visualization which became quite powerful, for he saw himself gambling. He interpreted the image to be, "Take a risk." This person expressed a regular lament that the answers to prayers were not usually very clear, but this answer seemed quite evident, he said.

A member tried repeating various phrases of the Lord's Prayer each day, imaging whatever phrase she was

working on in relationship to the people for whom she prayed. This person liked using the words of Jesus as she prayed.

A final insight of one participant was that "knowing what God does in other people's lives helped me to realize what He can do in mine."

There was a high level of interest in virtually every presentation. Process theology and Rollo May's ideas probably brought the greatest insights and enthusiasm. The Cobb booklet impacted people in significant ways, one of which was to affirm the appropriateness of exploration for a Christian.

#### Group II--Experimental.

The first evening one member began her prayer with "Divine Spirit," I used "Spirit of God," and the rest began with either "God," "Father," or "Lord." The second session one responded to the discussion that she did not think of pronouns for God, as she does for "chairman" for example. Another asked, "What difference does it make? Does it really matter to some people?" There was a group response, "Yes." (The group members did not respond as if they necessarily cared, but rather that a number of the members realized some people do care.) A male member said that he tried to be aware of sexist language when he prayed orally, but in his own private prayers, he felt the closest to God when he said, "Father." When he does not use "Father," he's very aware

that he is not praying just for himself. The other man said he used "Father," he thought, merely out of "force of habit, from way back." He said he was not at all conscientious about his language. He just prayed to God the Father because he had always heard it that way.

The logs following this section showed a lot of frustration for a member, trouble with the word "change" in another, and some actual experimentation for several others. One used silence to clear her mind, then began repeating the word, "peace." Another got the urge to write President Reagan about El Salvador. Still another tried to visualize light around a troubled spot, but had some difficulty doing this.

There was an interesting response in the third session. As soon as we began speaking about feminine images of Divinity there was a tendency for people to speak as if the masculine image was only one of judgment, whereas the feminine one would be loving. I found myself reminding the group that we do tend to think of even the masculine image in loving terms much of the time. There was stereotyping of images so quickly.

This week a woman shared that she had been raised in Christian Science as a child, so had been familiar with the Father-Mother God image. Last year (at age 63) she finally became more at ease, comfortable, with her own physical mother and began to use the image of Father-Mother God again in her prayers. She thought that her conflict

with her mother got in the way of seeing God as Mother. She did have to maintain a "fierce kind of independence" from her mother; now she does not, so she can think of God as Mother.

During the third session a man in the group reported on his dialogue with the Scriptural personality. He had chosen to talk with Christ, who said not to analyze prayer to death or he'd lose the real message, which is love. This man indicated that he was aware that he may have enabled the figure of Christ in his dialogue to say what he at that point in time was wanting to hear.

I noted that it was probably not by accident that a woman reported in her log that she sang frequently that week, "This is My Father's World."

A person in the fourth session shared an appreciation for silence, saying that it enabled her to get outside herself, to let go of thoughts about herself. Another experienced quite a bit of frustration with the silence, indicating that she wanted to "do" something with the silent time, so she started petitionary prayers subvocally.

It was expressed during the sixth session that imagery was by far the favorite expanded style of prayer. Even when I commented on the prior weeks' enjoyment of silence, most indicated that the imagery was more meaningful. At this session one person offered a testimony in relation to imagery, indicating that an image of a person who was in need of prayer came to her mind. Later she discovered that

indeed this person had been in difficulty. She had been moved by this experience.

It should be noted that almost every time this group ended, the same member suggested that we join hands and say the Lord's Prayer. I doubt that there was no connection between the introduction of alternative images of Divinity and styles and the need on her part to affirm the importance of this prayer which Jesus taught, which is verbal, and which uses the Father image.

At the last session there were finally a number of responses to me and my leadership. (I had asked for some before, but had received very little.) At this point there was expression of appreciation for receiving all the sheets with information. Several who had asked for a bibliography (which I handed out during the last session) felt that they would pursue the topics further some day. One member verbalized a surprise that there were so many kinds of prayer. She had just thought prayer was prayer! One or more members offered insight as to how often they found themselves visualizing people as they prayed. A member was grateful for silent prayer (the same one who had spent the silent time verbalizing, because there was nothing to "do.") She indicated that in a certain situation in her life, there was no clear option to think about or to verbalize, so silence in the midst of that concern was beneficial. Two spoke of increased frequency in thinking of the Holy Spirit as acting. One spoke of repeating a phrase while in the

dentist chair. She was thrilled that it did calm her.

I recollected that it had taken several years for me to become aware of all of these facets of prayer, and I shared my awareness that it may have seemed like a lot to squeeze into a few weeks. There was a general sigh of relief and some laughter over those comments, for indeed several people were feeling a bit overwhelmed by the number of "new" ideas.

One person shared at this time her insight that there was "always going to be a problem with language." She related a solution found in a book she had been reading, in which the author (Carl Rogers) had used female and male pronouns in alternate chapters. After a while that became easy to read, she said. "We are beginning to see what our language does...that calling everything "he" does things for little girls. . ." She continued, "Maybe religion will be affected soon." She spoke of having a new assistant minister, a woman, who used the phrase, "Womb of God," and who spoke of Jesus as weeping. She felt that as ministers are more aware of the concerns, the churches would move into changes "naturally." She concluded that the church is frequently "on the tail end of a lot of things" and "maybe we are being pushed into it. . . ." I can simply respond: "Amen!"

The following are some reflections lifted out of the logs of those in the experimental group. I provide these to indicate the kinds of responses people might have

to the presentation of the expanded options in prayer.

- Some terms not used, hitherto--e.g., Reconciler, Servant God, Excellent.
- Silence--feel unskilled. . .am I afraid of it?. . .do I feel compelled to speak?
- Yes I suppose I really do think of God as Father more often than not but when I pray in and through the Holy Spirit I find I have exceedingly greater strength and power without realizing it. Perhaps it was that all-encompassing expandedness of God that I was reaching through, to, and for. . .
- Genesis-God created. . .why not, Mother and Father?. . . what could be more natural?
- Have feeling of "not fitting" in prayer group. It is painful--not "prideful" to feel this. Yet I hold on to the hope and trust that out of my coming will evolve more effective ways of my attempts at meaningful prayer.
- Going over my difficulty with prayer group and discovered that my faith may not be strong enough to play with different approaches to God. . . I have felt most uncomfortable trying to alter and/or experiment with my prayer images. I prayed for the courage to try without fear to experience prayer effectively in different ways. . .
- When busy week, difficult to remember to practice to do things differently. . .did pray with greater attention to gender-free communication. . .
- The prayer class has given me much to ponder about. It has been helpful to be with a group of such prayer-oriented, wonderful people and to feel the power of prayer in their lives. It has encouraged me to keep trying to 'open up to God' and feel this power too in all situations. . .
- I found the sessions very interesting and although I may not knowingly apply the things I learned, I am sure some of them will come out unconsciously in my prayer life.

These comments suggest that some opening up did take place and that it is uncomfortable as well as exciting to "tamper" with prayer. It is very obvious that the control group did not naturally move into the areas of images which the experimental group focused upon. Neither did they inquire, for example, what to do with the silence, when they spoke of praying silently. There was not nearly the struggle, as would be expected, and insights focused more upon personal developments in a supportive group.



## ANALYSIS OF STATISTICS GATHERED FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

In the questionnaire which I prepared there are six questions which refer to Divinity as masculine: #13 (God), #29 (Christ), #38 ("Male Characteristics"), #68 (He), #73 (Jesus), #75 (Father). There are five questions which refer to Divinity as feminine: #23 (Mother), #34 (Goddess), #44 (Mary), #56 (She), #78 ("Female Characteristics"). One question refers to a somewhat gender-free image, "Spirit," #77, and two refer to what might be considered gender-full images: "Mother-Father God," #61 and "Trinity," #76. (Of course, the Trinity may be seen as all masculine, too.) In order to compare equally, I took the scores associated with Christ and with Jesus and recorded the average. Then, there were five scores for images associated with the masculine and five scores associated with feminine images.

Table 4 shows the average score given by the ten people of Group I to questions which refer to gender in Divinity, in the pre-group questionnaire, the one immediately after the group ended, and in the questionnaire mailed three months later. Table 5 shows the same information for the thirteen people of Group II. The people who were men are so indicated.

The summaries of the averages are shown in Tables 6 and 7.

TABLE 4

AVERAGE SCORES FOR QUESTIONS RELATING TO  
GENDER IN DIVINITY  
Group I - Control

Pre-Group Questionnaire				
Person	Avg.Mas.	Avg.Fem.	Avg.Gen-Fr.	Avg.Gen-Fl.
P <sub>1</sub>	2.8	1	1	1
P <sub>2</sub>	4.6	2.6	4	3.5
P <sub>3</sub>	4.4	1.6	3	2
P <sub>4</sub>	5	1.6	1	2.5
P <sub>5</sub>	4.5	1	4	3
P <sub>6</sub>	4.8	1.2	4	3.5
P <sub>7</sub> -male	4.3	1.6	2	3
P <sub>8</sub> -male	5.6	1	4	2.5
P <sub>9</sub>	4.9	1	7	4
P <sub>10</sub>	5.1	1	1	1.5
	<hr/> 4.6	<hr/> 1.36	<hr/> 3.1	<hr/> 2.65=Grp.Avg.

TABLE 4 - Continued

## Group 1

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Questionnaire After Group				
Person	Avg.Mas.	Avg.Fem.	Avg.Gen-Fr.	Avg.Gen-Fl.
P <sub>1</sub>	2.2	1.6	1	1.5
P <sub>2</sub>	4.2	2.6	4	3
P <sub>3</sub>	4	2.7	3	2.5
P <sub>4</sub>	4.5	1.5	4	2.5
P <sub>5</sub>	4.5	1	3	2.5
P <sub>6</sub>	4.9	1.4	4	3
P <sub>7</sub> -male	4.9	1.4	3	3.5
P <sub>8</sub> -male	5.6	1	1	1.5
P <sub>9</sub>	5.4	1	4	3.5
P <sub>10</sub>	5.5	1	1	1.5
	<hr/> 5.1	<hr/> 1.5	<hr/> 2.8	<hr/> 2.4-Grp.Avg.

TABLE 4 - Continued

## Group I

Questionnaire Three Months Later				
Person	Avg.Mas.	Avg.Fem.	Avg.Gen-Fr.	Avg.Gen-Fl.
P <sub>1</sub>	2.7	1.2	1	3
P <sub>2</sub>	3.6	2.6	4	3
P <sub>3</sub>	4.8	1.8	4	3
P <sub>4</sub>	5	1.2	2	1.5
P <sub>5</sub>	4.8	1	4	3.5
P <sub>6</sub>	4.9	1.4	4	3
P <sub>7</sub> -male	5	1.8	3	3.5
P <sub>8</sub> -male	6.4	1	4	3.5
P <sub>9</sub>	5	1.2	4	3.5
P <sub>10</sub>	5.2	1	1	2.5
	<hr/> 4.7	<hr/> 1.4	<hr/> 3.1	<hr/> 2.9=Grp. Avg.

TABLE 5

AVERAGE SCORES FOR QUESTIONS RELATING TO  
GENDER IN DIVINITY

Group II - Experimental

Pre-Group Questionnaire				
Person	Avg.Mas.	Avg.Fem.	Avg.Gen-Fr.	Avg.Gen-Fl.
P <sub>1</sub>	4.4	2.8	1	3.5
P <sub>2</sub>	3.4	2.6	3	4
P <sub>3</sub>	3.2	4	4	3.5
P <sub>4</sub>	5	1	1	1
P <sub>5</sub> -male	5.1	1	3	3
P <sub>6</sub>	4.9	2.6	4	4
P <sub>7</sub>	5	1	4	3
P <sub>8</sub> -male	5	1	1	2.5
P <sub>9</sub>	4.6*	1	4	2.5
P <sub>10</sub>	5.4	2.2	4	3
P <sub>11</sub>	4.7	2.4	5	1*
P <sub>12</sub>	6.1	5.6	4	7
P <sub>13</sub>	4.2	1	1	1
	<hr/> 4.7	<hr/> 2.2	<hr/> 3	<hr/> 3 = Grp. Avg.

\*One of the questions upon which this average was taken was left blank.

TABLE 5 - Continued

## Group II

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Questionnaire After Group				
Person	Avg.Mas.	Avg.Fem.	Avg.Gen-Fr.	Avg.Gen-Fl.
P <sub>1</sub>	4.1	2.2	2	2.5
P <sub>2</sub>	3.1	2.6	4	4
P <sub>3</sub>	3.2	3.9	4	4
P <sub>4</sub>	5.3	1	1	1.5
P <sub>5</sub> -male	5.4	1.4	4	3
P <sub>6</sub>	4.3	1.6	4	3
P <sub>7</sub>	5.1	1	2	2.5
P <sub>8</sub> -male	5	1	1	2.5
P <sub>9</sub>	4	1.6	4	3.5
P <sub>10</sub>	4.4	3	5	5.5
P <sub>11</sub>	5.1	1.8	5	3
P <sub>12</sub>	4.4	3.2	1	5
P <sub>13</sub>	3.6	2	4	2.5
	<hr/> 4.4	<hr/> 2.0	<hr/> 3.2	<hr/> 3.3 = Grp.Avg.

TABLE 5 - Continued

## Group II

---

Questionnaire Three Months Later				
Person	Avg.Mas.	Avg.Fem.	Avg.Gen-Fr.	Avg.Gen-Fl.
P <sub>1</sub>	3.9	2	4	2*
P <sub>2</sub>	2.9	2	2	3
P <sub>3</sub>	3.6	3.6	4	4
P <sub>4</sub>	5.5	1	1	1
P <sub>5</sub> -male	5.8	1.2	4	4.5
P <sub>6</sub>	3.5	2.2	4	2.5
P <sub>7</sub>	5.4	1	3	3
P <sub>8</sub> -male	4.4	1.8	3	3
P <sub>9</sub>	2**	1.8	4	3.5
P <sub>10</sub>	4.8	3.2	5	4.5
P <sub>11</sub>	4.7	3.4	4	3.5
P <sub>12</sub>	4.3	3	7	5.5
P <sub>13</sub>	3.6	1.8	1	1
	<hr/> 4.2	<hr/> 2.2	<hr/> 3.5	<hr/> 3.2=Grp.Avg.

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\*A response was marked between two numbers, so I took the average.

\*\*One of the questions on which this average was taken was left blank.

TABLE 6

COMPARISON OF PRE AND POST QUESTIONNAIRES  
Group I - Control

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	Mas.	Fem.	G-Fr.	G-Fl.
Pre Ques.	4.60	1.36	3.1	2.65
Immed. After Ques.	5.07	1.52	2.8	2.40
3 Mo. Later Ques.	4.74	1.42	3.1	2.90

TABLE 7

COMPARISON OF PRE AND POST QUESTIONNAIRES  
Group II - Experimental

---

	Mas.	Fem.	G-Fr.	G-Fl.
Pre Ques.	4.69	2.17	3.0	3.0
Immed. After Ques.	4.38	2.02	3.15	3.27
3 Mo. Later Ques.	4.18	2.15	3.54	3.15



One observes from Tables 6 and 7 that the masculine images do dominate and that feminine images are used least in both the control and experimental groups. Gender-free and gender-full images are used less often than masculine and more often than feminine images. The masculine imagery is used at a scale of 4 to 5, that is, "sometimes" to "more often than not," while the gender-full and gender-free images were "rarely" or "not usually" used by the control group and "not usually" used by the experimental group. The feminine imagery was fairly stable in the pre, post, and three-months post tests, in each group. Feminine imagery was virtually never used in Group I and "rarely" used in Group II.

I used the Mann-Whitney U Test to compute statistically whether these scores indicate any significant degree of difference between the groups. The hypothesis is that these two independent groups are drawn from the same population. The results show that this hypothesis must be rejected in the case of feminine imagery each time the questionnaire was administered. That is, before, after, and three months later, the experimental group used measurably more feminine imagery than did the control group. The hypothesis is also rejected for gender-free and gender-full imagery on the questionnaire which was given immediately after the groups.

My hypotheses regarding identification and affiliation could only be tested if there is a significant

difference between these groups. Because there is a difference in the use of feminine imagery and (gender-free and gender-full immediately after the groups) I proceeded to analyze the responses to the questions which related to my hypotheses.

Using the Mann-Whitney U Test, one finds that there is a statistically significant difference between the sampling populations on questions 11, 16, 30, 40, 46, 51, 53, 59, and 72, but only on the three-month post test. That is, the groups were measurably different from each other in their responses to the following items, but only three months after the group ended:

- I feel in touch with the divine.
- I value independence.
- I feel close to males.
- I feel I am independent from females.
- I cooperate with females.
- I feel self-confident when I pray.
- I cooperate with males.
- When I finish praying, I feel satisfied.
- I feel I am dependent on males.

No significant difference was found with questions 21, 26, 35, 37, 63, 65, and 67:

- I feel close to females.
- I feel I am dependent upon females.
- I value dependence.
- I am competitive with females.
- I feel dependent upon the divine.
- I feel I am independent from males.
- I am competitive with males.

And, question 60, indicating how one feels "closely related to the divine," showed a difference in the sampling population on the pre-test only.

A Content Analysis of the number of masculine,

gender-free, gender-full, and feminine images used in the "sample prayers" from question 2 on the questionnaire is shown in Tables 8 and 9.

This data clearly shows that feminine imagery had not become significant enough to be used by any group member in the sample prayer. Gender-free options (primarily, "Spirit") were used by a few people in the control group. And, except for two instances, there were no gender-full options used. One interesting observance is that members of the experimental group became less specific in naming the Deity as they prayed. They simply spoke to Divinity without writing down an image or term. This may show some hesitancy to name a masculine image, but not enough interest or desire or courage to name a feminine, gender-free or gender-full one.

TABLE 8

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GENDER RELATED PRONOUNS  
FOR DIVINITY IN SAMPLE PRAYERS  
Group I - Control

	Masc. terms	Fem. terms	G.Fr. terms	G-Fl. terms	None
Pre-test	10	0	1	0	1
After-Group	14	0	4	0	
3 Mo. Later	10	0	0	0	

TABLE 9

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GENDER RELATED PRONOUNS  
FOR DIVINITY IN SAMPLE PRAYERS  
Group II - Experimental

---

	Masc. terms	Fem. terms	G.Fr. terms	F-Fl. terms	None
Pre-test	14	0	1	1	2
After-Group	9	0	0	1	5
3 Mo. Later	14	0	0	0	6

---

I need to emphasize that I was not testing to see whether people would change. I wanted to know, if they did use a variety of images for Divinity, how that would affect their relationship to Divinity and to other people.

The statistical results show little, except that indeed, by three months after the group meetings, the groups had moved apart in thought enough to be significantly different populations on several of the crucial items. It is important to note that the usage of feminine imagery for Divinity was still "rare," for the experimental group. This was compared to a regular usage of masculine imagery. The hypotheses can only be tested adequately when there is a more equivalent usage of diverse images for Divinity.

Only one individual, who was in the experimental

group responded that she used feminine images about as often as she used masculine ones. It is instructive to look at her responses to the questions of dependency, cooperation, and independence. She values independence "more often than not" or "almost always." She indicated feeling independent from females "never," then "not usually," then "sometimes," and independent from males "sometimes," "sometimes," and "not usually." She stayed fairly consistent, stating dependency upon females and males "sometimes" and dependency upon Divinity "almost always." She feels close to females virtually always, but close to males "sometimes." She commented "it varies" by the question of closeness to Divinity, checking "sometimes" to "almost always." She is cooperative, she feels, with females "rarely," then "sometimes." She gave a similar response to the question regarding competition with males. Her sample prayer began with "God," but "Mother-Father" was given as an alternate sample on the second questionnaire. As the only group member who used diverse images sufficiently to look at my hypothesis, she confirmed my hypothesis in not being overly dependent upon males or a male Divinity and in seeming to have a strong identification and bonding with women. This is the kind of analysis which could be done, once people practice the diverse options.

Expanded styles were not sufficiently used to observe any impact from that. Only one sample prayer on the questionnaires indicated something other than a discursive style. However, various people did rank "repetitious prayer"

"imagery," and "silence" as "occasionally" used.

Obviously much more research needs to be done to test the hypotheses I have made. Mine was a small pilot study. One alternative for future research would be to start with a group of women and men who have already begun to expand their praying styles. This group could be compared to a control group whose members pray with traditional Christian imagery. A feminist church-related organization may be tapped as a resource for the experimental volunteers. It would be insightful to compare a group which follows the tradition of the Goddess with one which is traditionally Christian. An alternative would be to create an experimental group as I did, from those interested in prayer, but not yet interested in these concerns. This group could meet for a considerable length of time, perhaps a year or two. More motivation actually to use the expanded styles and images would develop, so that there would be data to analyze.

For complete research it would be advisable to study groups of women only, men only, and those which are mixed. Either sex would very likely act differently when alone and when in the presence of the other.

I have observed within myself and in others that there is considerable lag time between a seed of consciousness-raising, its initial use, and its incorporation into regular practice. The statistical differences after three months seem to point to this time-lag, too. In any further research, this time factor needs to be considered more

seriously. For it is only after the expanded practice becomes established that the hypotheses can be tested.

The questionnaire needs to be revised to include more gender-free and gender-full options. It also should include more questions which give clues to self-respect, the use of will, and courage.

Another viable way to test these hypotheses would be to work with a number of people individually, making case studies. This could be done at a pastoral counseling center, the staff of which was especially alert to the use of prayer. Or, an industrious local church minister, or group of ministers, might undertake this task.

My comments regarding men and their responses to prayer have been few and tentative. Unlike some male writers in the past, I admit that my statements about the opposite sex are primarily informed speculation. Some men are speaking to various concerns raised in this work, but as yet prayer itself has not been addressed by men with an eye to issues of feminism.

### SUMMARY

Women today need special encouragement and assistance in gaining and expressing increased self-respect (an appropriate self-definition and responsible use of power), a wise use of our wills, and courage (to grow, to name, and to act). Precisely what women need today can be found and reinforced through prayer! Through its power to elicit affili-

ation and identification with Divinity, prayer can enhance self-respect, guide the development and use of our wills, and engender courage. But given what prayer has been for centuries to most Christians, and what it still is today--discursive prayer to a powerful male God--it tends to reinforce virtually the opposite qualities from those which women need. Furthermore, the theology implied by this prayer practice does not match what many contemporary Christian theologians believe about the Deity. It is important that how we pray be congruent with what we believe about the Reality to Whom we pray. We must then ask: "How can prayer be expanded so that it would assist rather than retard our spiritual and psychological maturation?"

When prayer is seen as conscious communication with Divinity, it can be understood as a two-way phenomenon. Karl Barth saw prayer as communication to Deity and always in the form of asking. Schleiermacher stressed the receiving side of the communication, valuing experience, feeling, and intuition. His notion of foreordination made it impossible for him to affirm the value of the human will (except when it is used to bend to the Divine will). This view of foreordination also limited Schleiermacher's sense of what prayer might actually accomplish.

Tillich and process theologians offer theological positions which I believe provide a basis for expanded prayer styles and images of Divinity, expansions which will enable women and men to grow as we need to today. These theologians



also point to a concept of Deity which I believe to be closer to reality. Through Tillich's concept of mutual immanence there is seen an "identity and non-identity" with Divinity. That is, one reunites with the Creative Ground and in so doing can both identify with Being Itself, and affiliate, feeling closeness and responsibility. There is potential for healthy cooperation with Divinity, for this view recognizes the role of human freedom and will working in conjunction with Divinity. Prayer which is understood to be both receptive and shaping not only values the human will but also engenders self-respect and courage, for one must trust oneself to discern the Deity's directing creativity and one must take initiative. Tillich recognizes the life cycle of symbols, so his theology is open to expanding them when the need is present and the old symbols are ineffective. He seeks ecstatic encounter with the Spiritual Presence in prayer, so his concern is not with any particular style of prayer (i.e., discursive, silence), but rather with its authenticity.

Process theology offers another way of affirming the potentials of prayer, especially addressed to the needs of women today. Most process theologians seem to stress the receptive side of the communication with Deity. But there is a recognition of the directing possibility for prayer, too. Conceptually, process theology offers a way of grasping how both Divinity and other events are affected by prayer. The wonderful strength of process theology is its

ability to describe how Divinity lures and guides, but only in cooperation with our own decision-making. It also shows how each event influences every other event. These meta-physical insights yield an ethic which values the will highly, fosters immense respect for one's own power, and gives a basis for courage to act. The expansion of prayer styles is not only affirmed, but is required, if one functions out of a process perspective. This is true because Divine guidance is given through all aspects of the human psyche and body: emotions, will, imagination, intuition, body-wisdom, etc. The various prayer styles, used in balance with each other, help to elicit as much guidance from the Deity as possible. Various process theologians have addressed the need for expanding images for Divinity to gain more accurate options; a few specifically mention the need for more feminine imagery.

Since prayer holds potential for us today, and since there are viable Christian theologies which undergird the use of expanded prayer options, we need to begin to attend to learning and practicing those options!

We looked first at styles of prayer, and I explored five options: silence, imagery prayer, repetitious words, action as prayer, and discursive prayer. Silence and imagery prayer tend to emphasize the immanental nature of Divinity. Consequently, they offer strong possibilities for identification with the Deity. The concept of the "wholly other" is reduced, but affiliation is felt, as an internalized communion. Both silence and imagery tend to require a

courageous looking at the self, and this may engender courage in a broader dimension, too. The very act of maintaining silence or repeating a phrase tends to increase one's willing capacity. Imagery requires and possibly enhances self-respect, for it demands of the one who prays a great deal of discernment--to grasp messages and to integrate them into one's actions.

When using discursive prayer, many people employ childlike dependent and demanding language, speaking as if they were handing over their concerns and not fully cooperating with Divinity in the process (e.g., "Give me," "Help me," "Make me," "Be with").

Action prayer is included in the discussion primarily for the sake of completeness; however, I expect that few Christians would actually use the practicing of the presence or social action modes of prayer with much regularity. It is important to note that although these four expanded styles seem to offer positive hope for regaining the potentials of prayer, some of these styles can be used to maintain dependency. Repetitious phrases especially can dampen one's own power. But, one can choose phrases which will be empowering.

Next, we turned to four categories of images: primarily masculine, primarily feminine, gender-full, and gender-free. If the image of Divinity is only an image of some segment of humanity, we see that all sorts of imbalances develop. Since the image of Deity in Christianity

has been masculine, men have identified with it too much and women have been hampered in our attempts to identify. We have been left only with depending upon, leaning. We see that images for Divinity have changed throughout history, although not without resistance and conflict. Feminine imagery for Deity survived from ancient times, even though Jews and Christians tried to force it out of existence. We see the Deity likened to a Mother, a Womb, a Seamstress and other feminine images in the Scriptures themselves. Today some women are turning to the Goddess as a truly feminine Divine image. The Goddess image helps to legitimize our power, to affirm our bodies and life cycles, to value our will, and to enhance our bonding with other women. Mary has been a feminine image to which some have prayed as mediator, but in that role it is hard to see a positive benefit. If Mary's autonomy is stressed, there may be some retrievable value in this feminine image.

In addition to primarily masculine and primarily feminine images, we can use gender-full and gender-free options. Neither of these usages are brand new. The word for Deity in Genesis, Elohim, referred to masculine and feminine elements. People throughout history, from Jewish mystics to Gnostic Christians to Dame Julian of Norwich have used gender-full images. Christian Scientists have been naming Divinity, "Father-Mother God" for almost a century. One image which is emerging because it is not as hierarchical as parental images is that of a Divine Couple.

Gender-free images may be used in abundance in public worship, during a stage of transition to more diversity. Using the word, "God," without a pronoun is satisfactory for some, and I use this in public worship very often. However, it is not truly satisfactory for changing what needs to be changed today. For once one begins to think of the Goddess image, one is clear that "God" is still male. Biblical terms such as Light, Love, Creator; Tillich's terms such as Spiritual Presence and Ground of Being; and terms such as Creative Nurturer may be effective for naming in a gender-free way the Deity.

When prayer lives up to its potential, it can aid women and men toward maturity and healthier relationships. But, in order to do so, its usage must be expanded. Some viable Christian theologies support this task. Some styles of prayer which have been tried at various times by Christians are available for us. And some images of Divinity are ready for us to pick up and use. In a sense, we need self-respect, courage, and acts of will to choose to grow in our praying activities. But, if we choose to grow, we may find that our praying itself assists us.

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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Both Karl Barth and Paul Tillich were born in 1886. Barth was born in Basel, Switzerland, Tillich, in Starzedel, Germany. Many agree that Schleiermacher, who lived from 1768 to 1834 and was a professor at the University of Berlin, dominated the theology of the nineteenth century to become the "father" of "liberal theology." Barth and Tillich were each influenced by Schleiermacher, Barth reacted against much of what Schleiermacher emphasized while Tillich sought to maintain some of Schleiermacher's emphasis upon experience, yet maintaining the centrality of Jesus as the Christ. Barth became known as the "father" of neoreformation theology, writing over 9000 pages in his thirteen volumes of the Church Dogmatics. Both Tillich and Barth were actively involved in movements which opposed Hitler. Tillich's antagonism toward National Socialism forced him to leave Germany. This brought Tillich to Union Theological Seminary in New York as Professor of Philosophical Theology (1933-1955). After retirement Tillich became the University Professor at Harvard and also taught at the University of Chicago in 1962. The first volume of Tillich's Systematic Theology, his major work, was published in 1951. Tillich sought to speak to the less theologically technical reader

through his smaller books, such as the Courage to Be and The Dynamics of Faith. He integrated practical and psychological reflections and tried to mediate between diverse schools of theology. He made an enormous break with tradition in his insistence upon God not as a being, but rather "Being Itself." Both Tillich and Barth sought to bring theology back from the progressive, optimistic stance toward which it had moved at the turn of the century, to bring it to a more realistic view. Barth looked to the Scriptures entirely, or endeavored to do that. Tillich was influenced philosophically by existentialism and practically by cultural developments, both historical and contemporary.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile process theology was emerging as another theological and philosophical option in the United States. Process theology can be understood in three ways, John Cobb Jr. pointed out in 1980. First, it can refer in a very general way to all forms of theology which do not emphasize substance, but rather becoming and occurrences. Second, it can refer only to theology which uses the concepts of Alfred North Whitehead as its basis. Third, process theology can refer to the developments which emerged out of the Chicago Divinity School. Process theologians who have come out of this school since the late 1920's have in most cases been

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander McKelway, The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich (New York: Dell, 1964) 17-22; David Mueller, Karl Barth (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972) 13-48; Martin Redeker, Schleiermacher (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973) 1-5.

influenced by Whitehead's thought, but not all of these scholars would call themselves Whiteheadians, and they may have significant differences from Whitehead's thought.<sup>2</sup>

Alfred North Whitehead joined the faculty of Harvard University as professor of philosophy after his early retirement from the University of London as a mathematics professor.<sup>3</sup> His work was developed and expanded by Charles Hartshorne, an assistant of Whitehead while at Harvard, who had done a great deal of his philosophical reflection prior to this acquaintance. Henry Nelson Wieman was invited to the Chicago Divinity School to give lectures explaining Whitehead's book Religion in the Making, in 1926. He joined the faculty there in 1927 and taught until 1947 in Chicago. Hartshorne joined the University of Chicago faculty in 1928 as a member of the department of philosophy. He gradually influenced the work being done in the Divinity School and the University of Chicago from 1943 to 1955. Hartshorne and Wieman influenced students who carried on the exploration of what has become known as process theology. They have expanded upon the work of Whitehead, Wieman, and Hartshorne to relate that thought to a variety of fields, from aesthetics to education. Schubert Ogden and John Cobb, Jr. are two of the prominent students of that generation who

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<sup>2</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr. "Process Theology and the Doctrine of God," Bijdragen XLI (1980) 350-367.

<sup>3</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976) 162-3.

are now teaching in seminaries.

There is a common belief by all who call themselves process theologians that while some aspects of Divinity are unchangeable, in some way, too, the Deity is radically involved with creation. Process theologians argue that this view of Divinity is one which is especially faithful to the Biblical view of God as Love.

## APPENDIX B

## GLOSSARY OF WHITEHEADIAN TERMS

"Actual Occasion"--is the smallest real event; it creates and recreates itself moment after moment. It receives input, data, from the actual occasions of the past through what is called "causal efficacy" and from God in the present as it creates itself for the next moment. It also perceives contemporary actual occasions through what is called "presentational immediacy."

"Concrescence"--the moment of self-creation of an actual occasion. It is understood to move through phases, from the conformal or receptive phase through supplemental phases, until it reaches "satisfaction." The final phase is the form in which it will be prehended by other actual occasions in the future; this is the satisfaction/superject phase.

"Conformal Response"--at the beginning of the concrescence of an actual occasion that occasion receives the past by responding to it in a conformal phase; the response indicates how that present tense occasion is taking the past into itself.

"Eternal Objects"--there are potentials which have not yet been prehended, received, by any actual occasion, yet are present as potentialities. Since everything must exist "somewhere," these are understood to exist in the Deity's primordial nature. Eternal objects are not necessarily only what has not yet been received, but are qualities which can be "chosen" by any actual occasion; they are not mandatory for any particular occasion.

"General Potentiality"--is the total bundle of possibilities provided by the many eternal objects in the Deity.

"Prehend"--an actual occasion is said to "prehend" another actual occasion or an eternal object. This means that it attends to the data from the occasions or eternal objects. If it "prehends positively," then it accepts the data as one element in its self-creation. If it "prehends negatively," then it has excluded, in effect rejected, that data for itself.

"Real Potentiality"--consists of those elements of the "general potentiality" which could be relevant for a particular actual occasion in the moment of self-creation, given the actual world in which that occasion concretes into being.

"Subjective Aim"--this does not exist prior to the concrescence of a particular actual occasion, but comes into being with its concrescence. It is derived from the Deity, as "a lure (to be more or less completely followed) toward that way of becoming which is most in line with God's aim."<sup>1</sup> It is the ideal of what that actual occasion could become. "Subjective aims constitute the means by which God works in the world."<sup>2</sup>

"Subjective Form"--how the actual occasion feels the data it prehends. Different actual occasions canprehend the same data with different emotions; for example, a farmer would look at a rainfall after a dry spell differently than would a family who had just set out on a picnic.

"Superject"--is the final stage of concrescence of an actual occasion. It is the form in which that occasion will be

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<sup>1</sup>Donald W. Sherburne (ed.) A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966) 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 244.

available to the next generation of occasions. The occasion receives "objective immortality" in that it will forever remain within the Deity's consequent nature, now that it is "completed," in its superject form. It is the self-chosen, revised form of what was the subjective aim at the initial phase of concrescence, yet in some sense, too, it influenced each stage.



## APPENDIX C

## ADVERTISEMENTS FOR "PRAYER EMPOWERMENT GROUPS"

Develop a more effective prayer life, through conscious reflection upon our styles and content of prayers! Led by Dr. Carolyn Bohler, minister of the Mission Hills United Methodist Church. She needs 40 volunteers, men and women, age 18 and older, of diverse denominations, to commit themselves to meet in groups of 10 for a duration of 7 weeks, 1½ hrs. each week. YOU could benefit from an intensive ecumenical prayer experience in small groups.

Requirements: attendance is mandatory at each of the 7 sessions, very minimal "homework," attendance at an orientation session with all the 40 participants in order to fill out a questionnaire on Saturday, March 14, at 1 p.m. (There will be two follow-up questionnaires after the last session, too.)

Biography of C. Bohler: has led small groups of diverse kinds for the past ten years; a chaplain in a hospital for one year; the chaplain for Simpson College, Iowa, one year; "Coordinator of Spiritual Life" at School of Theology at Claremont for three years; minister of Mission Hills UMC the past three years.

FOUR GROUPS: Sundays 1-2:30 p.m. Mar. 15 through May 3 (except Apr. 19)  
 Sundays 3-4:30 p.m. Mar. 15 through May 3 (except Apr. 19)  
 Mondays 6-7:30 p.m. Mar. 16 through May 4 (except Apr. 20)  
 Mondays 8-9:30 p.m. March 16 through May 4 (except Apr. 20)

ORIENTATION SESSION SATURDAY, MARCH 14th, 1 p.m. at Mission Hills United Methodist Church, 4044 Lark St. (Groups will meet at C. Bohler's home after that.)

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, call C. Bohler at 296-1243 (mornings)  
 or 298-0424 (after 5 p.m.)

Or, write, and include: Name, telephone number, address, denomination, age, and list the group times which are feasible for you, in your order of preference (your first choice first). Address to 4044 Lark St., San Diego, CA. 92103

## APPENDIX C

## ADVERTISEMENTS IN CHURCH NEWSLETTERS

MISSION HILLS-FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
4070 JACKDAW STREET, SAN DIEGO, CA  
92103

## PRAYER EMPOWERMENT GROUPS

led by Dr. Carolyn Bohler, minister  
Mission Hills United Methodist  
Church. 40 volunteers, men and  
women, age 18 and older, of diverse  
denominations will commit themselves  
to meet in groups of 10 for a dura-  
tion of 7 weeks, 1½ hrs. each week.  
Requirements: attendance is manda-  
tory at each of the 7 sessions, very  
minimal "homework", attendance at an  
orientation session with all the 40  
participants in order to fill out a  
questionnaire on Sat. Mar. 14 at  
1 p.m. Choices of 4 meeting times.  
Call C. Bohler 296-1243 mornings or  
298-0424 after 5 p.m.

PACIFIC BEACH UNITED METHODIST:

## PRAYER EMPOWERMENT GROUPS

Develop a more effective prayer  
life, through conscious reflec-  
tion upon our styles and content  
of prayers! Dr. Carolyn Bohler,  
minister of the Mission Hills  
United Methodist Church, needs 40  
volunteers, men and women, age 18  
and older, of diverse denomina-  
tions, to commit themselves to  
meet in groups of 10 for a dura-  
tion of 7 weeks, 1½ hours each  
week. YOU could benefit from an  
intensive ecumenical prayer ex-  
perience in small groups.

There will be an orientation  
session Sat., March 14th, 1 p.m.  
at Mission Hills United Methodist  
Church, 4044 Lark St. Subsequent  
meeting times for the four groups  
will be:

Sundays 1-2:30 p.m. (3/15-5/3)  
Sundays 3-4:30 p.m. (3/15-5/3)  
Mondays 6-7:30 p.m. (3/16-5/4)  
Mondays 8-9:30 p.m. (3/16-5/4)

If you are interested, call  
C. Bohler at 296-2343 (mornings)  
or 298-0424 (after 5 p.m.).

MISSION HILLS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
Fort Stockton Drive at Lark Street  
San Diego, California 92103  
Telephone: 296-1243 - Parsonage: 298-0424  
Dr. Carolyn Bohler, Minister

PRAYER EMPOWERMENT GROUPS

Develop a more effective prayer life, through conscious reflection upon the styles and content of your prayers! For my dissertation research, I need 40 volunteers, men and women, age 18 and older, of diverse denominations, to commit themselves to meet in groups of 10 for a duration of 7 weeks, 1½ hrs. each week.

Requirements: attendance is mandatory at each of the 7 sessions, very minimal "homework," attendance at an orientation session with all the 40 participants in order to fill out a questionnaire on Saturday, March 14th, at 1 p.m. (There will be two follow-up questionnaires after the last session, too.)

FOUR GROUPS: Sundays 1-2:30 p.m. March 15 through May 3 (except April 19)  
Sundays 3:00-4:30 p.m. - March 15 - May 3 (except April 19)  
Mondays 6-7:30 p.m. - March 16 - May 4 (except April 20)  
Mondays 8-9:30 p.m. - March 16 - May 4 (except April 20)

Orientation session Sat., Mar. 14, 1 p.m. at Mission Hills United Methodist Church.

## APPENDIX D

## QUESTIONNAIRE

## Prayer Empowerment Groups -- Spring, 1981

I appreciate your responding to the questions asked. Please answer rather spontaneously, without feeling the need to weigh the matters at great length. Answer every question. If you think that it is irrelevant to you, please circle "N/A," when that is provided, meaning "It does not apply," and briefly explain why the question does not apply to you. Please go straight through the questionnaire without skipping any questions; that is, do not pass one by to return to later.

Name:

Address:

Telephone (home): (hrs. there):

(work): (hrs. there):

Address you expect to have August 1st, if that is different:

Age: Sex: Profession:

Denomination: List all the denominations you have been affiliated with throughout your lifetime, starting with childhood and ending with the present time:

Siblings: List brothers and sisters and ages:

1. Please list your favorite religious writers or personalities:
2. Please give a sample prayer you would be likely to pray, if you prayed today. Feel free to use the back of the paper, if you need it.
3. Please describe yourself praying, in the manner most typical for you:

4. What major changes have there been in your life during the past year? (If none, write "none"):
  
5. List the experiences and specific training which you have had in the study of prayer (if any):
  
6. Have your prayers changed over the years? (If so, explain):
  
7. Do you think there are certain right or Christian ways to pray? (If so, explain):
  
8. Indicate how often you pray (not counting Sunday worship services):
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Once a month or less
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Once a week
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 3-5 times per week
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Once a day
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2-4 times per day
  - \_\_\_\_\_ More than 5 times per day
  
9. Circle the appropriate number in response to this statement:  
 "When I pray, I find the experience
 

Unenjoyable						enjoyable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
  
10. Circle the appropriate number in response to this statement:  
 "When I pray, my sense of personal prayer is
 

Diminished						increased
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

---

 Your name

For each of the following sentences, circle the number which makes the statement most accurate for you. Use the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NEVER	RARELY	NOT USUALLY	SOMETIMES	MORE OFTEN THAN NOT	ALMOST ALWAYS	ALWAYS
11.	I feel I am in touch with the divine.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
12.	When I pray, I first consider what style of prayer I will use.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
13.	I address the divine as "God."					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
14.	I consider prayer useless.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
15.	I tend to think that others are generally satisfied with their prayer lives.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
16.	I value independence.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
17.	I consider it a weakness to pray.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
18.	My minister prays verbally.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7	N/A	
19.	I am uncomfortable with how to address the divine.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
20.	When I begin to pray, I don't know how to start.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
21.	I feel close to females.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
22.	I pray verbally (thinking in words, even if not spoken aloud).					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
23.	I address the divine as "Mother."					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
24.	My minister uses silent prayer.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7	N/A	
25.	I feel proficient in prayer.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		
26.	I feel I am dependent upon females.					
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
				7		

27.	I worry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28.	When I pray, it is the same time each day.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	I address my prayer to "Christ."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30.	I feel close to males.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	My minister leads us in prayer by repeating specific words, again and again.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 N/A
32.	I visualize people when I pray.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33.	I pray about social concerns and how to care for them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34.	I address the divine as "Goddess."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35.	I value dependence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36.	I feel inhibited when I pray.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37.	I am competitive with females.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38.	I think of the divine as having "male" characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39.	When I pray, I include prayers about health.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40.	I feel I am independent from females.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41.	I attend church.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42.	I feel shy when I pray with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43.	I feel uncomfortable when I pray.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44.	I pray to "Mary."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45.	I use my imagination when I pray.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46.	I cooperate with females.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47.	I admire those who pray often.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48.	I appreciate myself more after I pray.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

49.	I feel self confident when I pray with others in a small group (2-10).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50.	My minister seems proficient at prayer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 N/A
51.	I feel self confident when I pray.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52.	I feel awkward in relating to the divine.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53.	I cooperate with males.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54.	I am uncomfortable with silence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55.	I pray, repeating specific words or phrases a number of times.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56.	I think of the divine as "She."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57.	When I pray, I feel motivated to make a change in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58.	I think my actions are prayers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59.	When I finish praying, I feel satisfied.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60.	I feel closely related to the divine.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61.	I address the divine as "Mother-Father God."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62.	I pray, seeking not to think in words.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63.	I feel dependent upon the divine.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64.	I feel a sense of competition in prayer, even when I am alone.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65.	I feel I am independent from males.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
66.	When I pray, I include family concern.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
67.	I am competitive with males.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 68. | I think of the divine as "He."   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 69. | I feel shy when I pray alone.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 70. | I feel competitive with others<br>when I pray.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 71. | I would feel self confident if<br>asked to pray in a large group<br>(over 50). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 72. | I feel I am dependent upon males.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 73. | I address my prayer to "Jesus."  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 74. | I feel a surge of energy when I<br>start to pray.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 75. | I address the divine as "Father."  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 76. | The concept of the trinity helps<br>me as I pray.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 77. | I address the divine as "Spirit."  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 78. | I think of the divine as having<br>"female" characteristics.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Here are some settings in which people pray. Rank these in order of frequency for you (most often is number one).

79.    \_\_\_ at work       \_\_\_ at family gatherings       \_\_\_ other  
          \_\_\_ at home       \_\_\_ alone                                (explain)  
          \_\_\_ at church    \_\_\_ in a prayer group
80. If there is anything else that you consider it is important that I know, please explain. You may use the back of the paper if needed.

## APPENDIX E

## GROUP I SHEETS DISTRIBUTED

## Prayer Empowerment Group

Purpose: To develop a more effective prayer life, through conscious reflection upon our prayers.

Definition of Prayer (used by Carolyn): Conscious Communication with the Divine.

Guidelines for Group:

1. Confidentiality, to develop trust among us and also for research. The tape will only be used to recall what occurred. (If it is played for anyone but Carolyn, that would be only for her Dissertation Committee, and no names would be given.)
2. It is all right to express any persistent feeling/thought within the group.
3. Start on time and end on time.
4. Present for all sessions.
5. Never pressure any person to participate more than he/she wants to, verbally.
6. Others?

Log of Prayer Activity:

Not necessarily compulsively, but conveniently begin to notice whenever you pray, whether it is a 10-second thought or a 5-minute concerted prayer time. Note the following

information in your "Log":

1. Date
2. Setting (includes location--at home, office, church, bus, etc., and with whom --alone, with spouse or friend, family, etc.).
3. Time (includes time of day and for how long).
4. Description of Prayer (how you went about praying and what you included in the content of the prayer).
5. Description of Experience (feelings of peace or frustration, etc., as well as any other explanations you wish to make).

Group Sessions: Plan is to have no more than half an hour of input at the beginning, with some catching up from past weeks, then a time of group prayer, with reflection upon our prayers. Discussion may include observations about our private prayers as well as in the group.

...

## Receptivity in Prayer

For Schleiermacher, the common element in all piety is the consciousness of being absolutely dependent upon God, or being in relation to God. One is not only absolutely dependent, one is also self-conscious of that dependency. Therefore, one becomes conscious of God. He ascribed piety to an individual according to his/her degree of consciousness of God dependency.

For Schleiermacher, Christ has the same nature as all other humans, but he differed in that he had a "constant potency of God-consciousness."

Schleiermacher describes prayer as "joining the thought of God with every thought of any importance that occurs to us." He says that "true prayer" is that which we offer when "the living thought of God is accompanying, purifying, and sanctifying all our other thoughts, feelings and purposes." He has difficulty with "wishing" prayers, for he would rather just have a whole mood of either "resignation" or "thanksgiving." (His resignation might be considered similar to receptivity today.)

Schleiermacher also dislikes "forms" of prayer and fixed hours. He prefers simply the growing in constant awareness of God. He does not think one should withdraw from activities to pray.

Process Theologians believe that prayer (spirituality) can be a whole stance of openness to the divine, through attention to: reason, imagination, will, body wisdom, emotions, relationships, dreams, etc. This would be the receptive side of prayer. (They also have a valuable way of understanding "active" prayer, which we will focus upon later.)

Rollo May, psychologist, discusses receptivity in the Courage to Create. He speaks of the artist as "holding him or herself alive and open to hear what being may speak." He points out that attention and "active listening" is required. He insists that receptivity is not at all passivity or laziness. It is active waiting--the waiting for the "birthing process to begin to move in its own organic time."

The Friends (Quakers) worship with a silence which is a "waiting." They sit in silence until an urge comes to a worshiper to speak; sometimes there is total silence. One must truly be moved to speak, as if the words are coming from a deep well within.

Lawrence LeShan discusses structured and unstructured meditation. One form of unstructured meditation is constant focus on one item, such as a symbol, picture, word phrase, sound, movement. One repeats, for example, "How do I love?" and stays in a receptive mood as ideas, images, or glimpses come as guidance regarding the quality of love in one's life.

Postures have been seen as aiding receptivity in almost every religion. Sitting with the palms of the hands up is a common receptive posture. Arms extended upward while standing, head upward, may be seen as emphasizing receptivity, especially in conjunction with the God Beyond. Gazing at the floor, or with eyes closed has been a way to keep distracting visual cues to a minimum.

# Insights from Rollo May, Psychologist Regarding Prayer

These insights are not made by May, regarding prayer itself, but have been compiled from his writings.

May's view of religion in general: "true religion" is a fundamental affirmation of life. Healthy religion opens the "deep levels of the unconscious" and helps one to assimilate the messages in the unconscious into one's conscious living. (Art of Counseling)

Religion can be constructive, when it: strengthens one's own sense of dignity, worth aids one to be confident in affirming values in life; and helps one to use and develop one's own ethical awareness, freedom and personal responsibility. Religion can be used neurotically, by aiding the individual to avoid facing his/her loneliness and anxiety. (Man's Search for Meaning)

All aspects of culture can be used as a false security when seized by a neurotic individual (i.e., prayer or literature).

Resistance to prayer -- "It is easier in our society to be naked psychologically or spiritually...For curious reasons we are shy about sharing the things that matter most."  
(Courage to Create)

--tools/techniques ought to extend consciousness, but can be used to protect oneself from consciousness

--fear of solitude..."to be alone is a sign of social failure..." this combines with the fear of the deeper dimensions to produce resistance...(Courage to Create)

Values are expressed in prayer very clearly...Check the content of our prayers...(Existential Psychology)

Assumptions/presuppositions are revealed in prayer:  
1. meaning in life affirmed or denied; 2. views regarding suffering/illness; 3. willingness to face insecurity/complexity vs. desire for simple clarity (Art of Counseling)

Prayer can integrate experience, reason and behavior...May affirms methods which can bring this integration. (Power and Innocence)

Prayer TENDS TO IMPLY THERE IS A MARGIN OF FREEDOM WITH RESPECT TO THE FUTURE! May believes we need to assume

there is this margin of freedom whenever we deal with an existing person. (Existential Psychology) He calls the chance to participate in the forming of the future, or the ability to influence evolution through awareness, a distinctively human characteristic. (Courage to Create) However, it is "deenergizing" to believe that there is no limit to human potential. There are limits to: death, sickness, intelligence, physical, emotional, environmental, metaphysical, country, historical moment, etc.

"Wish" to "Will" to "Decision"--Wish is the "imaginative playing with the possibility of some act or state occurring" ---Will is the "capacity to organize one's self so that movement in a certain direction or toward a certain goal may take place"...Decision involves commitment and is an act of the whole being...(Love and Will)

## Active, Directive, Intercessory Prayer

- I. Barth--speaks on the Lord's Prayer: it is six petitions, a doxology and the Amen. The first three petitions refer to our participation in God's cause, while the last three petitions concern us directly.
  1. Hallowed it be Thy Name--prayer is answered before it is formulated
  2. Thy Kingdom Come--final victory over sin
  3. Thy Will be done on earth...--returns us to the present, prayer to dispell any confusion so that God's will can be realized in our lives/world.

The first three are like a "sigh"; the last three are explicit, direct, imperative, bold...

  4. Give us daily bread--implies enough for all, praying to receive it without dispute/quarrel
  5. Forgive offenses--primarily to our default in relation to God...and forgiving others is a criteria for our understanding God's forgiveness.
  6. Lead not into tempt...--("Evil One" --nothingness that opposes God, for Barth)...We are asking for light...

Notice 8 times plural pronoun, "we" or "us" is used.
- II. Barth--what to pray for: ought not to be concerned whether we are praying for the right thing! Prayer for God's will is not enough. We are to be specific, to ask, and the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ will intercede to purify any "egoism," "anxiety," "desire," "passion," "short-sightedness," "stupidity," and "unreasonableness" we may have in our prayers....Elsewhere Barth speaks of praying for the true knowledge of God.
- III. Schleiermacher--(recall from "receptivity" paper) prefers openness to "God-consciousness" most of the time, but understands that people keep praying with wishes. So, he thinks, if done, that combining "God-consciousness" with "a wish for full success" would be the best way to specify details in prayer.
- IV. Process Theology:
 

God communicates to "actual entities" through lures and "gradiated initial aims"...In receptive prayer, we can be more open to these lures/aims (i.e., God's Will).

All "actual entities" (all that is) also communicate with every other thing, and with God. This is the directive possibility of prayer.

Explanation: at every second, every "thing" that exists is in the process of creating itself for the



next instant. Every single input from the past, and also from the present, is available as influence upon that new creation. The "thing" (actual occasion) itself has choice as to what to include and how much it will be influenced by each of the other events, so, in effect it creates itself. However, most of this obviously takes place unconsciously, and we seldom recognize even a tiny fraction of the influences upon us. God is the strongest force, persuasively influencing our momentary creations of ourselves, but God is persuasive, not "almighty" in "power."

At the moment of our self-creation, so to speak, we also can offer/do offer input into the rest of the world. (So, all creation goes into our momentary creation, then our little instant adds to the reservoir of the many again: the many into the one into the many....) Whether we intend to or not, we influence every other "thing" (event) on earth! Directive/intercessory prayer, then, could be thought of as intentionally influencing others, in the direction we believe God would be "luring" that thing. We can think of actual influence to the person/thing. They would still choose how much to allow our "prayerful, loving thought" into their next moment of creation. Another way to conceptualize what happens is to think of us aiming our thinking/praying toward God. God does respond, change. But we normally assume that God's wills/lures would already be for the very best. We can think of adding our concern to the already powerful persuasive influence of God, and thereby increasing the impact on the other.

## Written Prayers We Brought to Share

### A Daily Prayer" author unknown

Dear Lord, help me to live this day quietly--Easily;  
 To lean upon Thy Great strength Trustfully--Restfully;  
 To wait for the unfolding of Thy Will Patiently--Serenely;  
 To meet others Peacefully--Joyously;  
 To face tomorrow Confidently--Courageously.

\* \* \* \* \*

Father, I come to you in the same spirit in which I would go to my mother, were my mother available for communion, just for love. You are the Father and Mother of my being. You are the source of my life. You are the soul of me, the spirit of me. I have no favors to ask of you. I come to you for the joy of communion, to feel the assurance of your hand in mine, the touch of your finger on my shoulder--just to be in thy presence.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Dr. Charles Whiston's Prayers

#### "The Snowflake Prayer"

O, Lord Christ, in obedience to Thy Claim, I surrender myself to Thee this day; all that I am, and all that I have, to belong wholly and unconditionally to Thee for Thy using; take me away from myself, and use me up as Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, where Thou wilt, with whom Thou wilt.

O, Lord Christ, take from me by loving force all that I withhold from Thee, All that I will not give Thee, and I am for Thee and against myself.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### "Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer"

Our Father: Thy name be hallowed in (state name of person)  
 Reign over her with Thy Sovereignty,  
 Bend her will until it is conformed wholly to Thine,  
 Give (name) today Thy forgiving life.  
 Use (name) to be the carrier of Thy forgiving life to others.  
 Make (name) victorious today over her temptations,  
 Make (name) free from every evil power.

"A Spiritual Daily Dozen"  
--St. Stephen's Church, Philadelphia

The following "setting-up" exercises are recommended to develop Strength, stimulate Life, and release Power. Repeat each of the twelve or more times the first thing in the morning. While taking the exercises, breathe deeply, and inhale large quantities of the "Breath of Life."

1. Thou art God, in Whom I have put my trust.
2. Thy Presence is everywhere.
3. Thy Presence surrounds me; in Thee I live and move and have my being.
4. Thy Presence is within me, strengthening, inspiring, healing, and perfecting me.
5. Thy Presence banishes fear and worry and anxiety.
6. Thy Presence gives me strength for all my needs.
7. Thy Presence gives me confidence and courage in every situation.
8. Thy Presence drives out resentment and hatred, and subdues anger.
9. The inspiration of Thy Presence gives me understanding, that I may have clearness of vision, steadfastness of thought, and trueness of speech.
10. Thy Presence enables me to overcome evil and disease in all forms.
11. Nothing can separate me from Thy Presence.
12. Praise be to Thee, O Lord, who giveth me the Victory; through Jesus Christ, my Savior.

\* \* \* \* \*

By a Mother Superior, who wishes to be anonymous, from  
Little Book of Prayers, NY: Pauper Press, 1960.

Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older, and will some day be old.  
Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.  
Release me from craving to try to straighten out everybody's affairs.  
Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details--give me wings to get to the point.  
I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains. Help me to endure them with patience.  
But seal my lips to my own aches and pains--they are increasing and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.  
Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken.  
Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint--some of them are so hard to live with--but a sour old woman is

one of the crowning works of the devil.  
 Make me thoughtful, but not moody; helpful, but not bossy.  
 With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it  
 all--but Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the  
 end.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Hymn "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"

Pass me not, O gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry.  
 While on others thou art calling, Do not pass me by.

Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou  
 art calling, Do not pass me by.

Let me at thy throne of mercy Find a sweet relief; Kneeling  
 there in deep contrition, Help my unbelief.  
 Trusting only in thy merit, Would I seek thy face: Heal my  
 wounded, broken spirit, Save me by thy grace.  
 Thou the spring of all my comfort, More than life for me;  
 Whom have I on earth besides Thee? Whom in heaven but Thee?

\* \* \* \* \*

### From Meditations for Churchmen (sic) in the 70's by F. Kimper

"Fulfillment of Love" "The glory of God is its light, and  
 its lamp is the lamb. By its light shall the nations walk."  
 Revelation 21:23-24.

The new Jerusalem is my goal. To love as God loves is  
 painful. Time and again I have trusted others to love me,  
 and I have felt betrayed, deserted. That is hard to take.  
 Or I have trusted others to accept my love, and had them  
 reject it. That hurt. I have sometimes crawled behind walls  
 of silence and inaction, trusting no one. But that led only  
 to loneliness and despair, a far greater pain.

Better it seems to risk crucifixion, to endure the agony  
 of rejection in order to know the joy of fellowship with  
 others. Love, I believe, is never wholly lost. It registers  
 within my own being as integrity, a sense of oneness with  
 God. I have come to believe it registers on others as  
 strength, even when rejected, and triggers in some a response  
 of respect.

My hope is in God who loves me through all my errors and  
 imperfections, patiently teaching me through pain and joy how  
 to improve my loving. In this way He gradually leads me into  
 a fellowship of sensitive and responsible human beings in  
 whom his Spirit is incarnate. As each finds his own fulfill-  
 ment in loving interaction, the whole community praises God.

Prayer: The hope of joy calls me to risk loving, O God,  
 that I may one day share a fellowship with my neighbors that  
 matches my fondest dreams. Amen. Written 1970.

## APPENDIX F

## GROUP II SHEETS DISTRIBUTED

## Prayer Empowerment Group

Purpose: To develop a more effective prayer life, through conscious reflection upon our prayers.

Definition of Prayer: (used by Carolyn) Conscious Communication with the Divine.

Guidelines for Group:

1. Confidentiality, to develop trust among us and also for research. The tape will only be used to recall what occurred. (If it is played for anyone but Carolyn, that would be only for her Dissertation Committee, and no names would be given.)
2. It is all right to express any persistent feeling/ thought within the group.
3. Start on time and end on time.
4. Present for all sessions.
5. Never pressure any person to participate more than he/ she wants to, verbally.
6. Others?

Log of Prayer Activity:

Not necessarily compulsively, but conveniently begin to notice whenever you pray, whether it is a 10-second thought or a 5-minute concerted prayer time. Note the following information in your "Log":

1. Date
2. Setting (includes location --at home, office, church, bus, etc. and with whom --alone, with spouse or friend, family, etc.).
3. Time (include time of day and for how long).
4. Description of Prayer (how you went about praying and what you included in the content of the prayer)
5. Description of Experience (feelings of peace or frustrations, etc., as well as any other explanations you wish to make).

Group Sessions: Plan is to have no more than half an hour of input at the beginning, with some catching up from past weeks, then a time of group prayer, with reflection upon our prayers. Discussion may include observations about our

private prayers as well as in the group.

We will be "expanding" our notions of prayer in two ways. First, we will explore 5 types of prayer: verbal, imagery, silence, repetitious words, and action. Second, we will explore 5 general ways of using imagery for the divine: male, female, gender-full, gender-free, and the use of Mary in prayer.

As we explore each of these styles and images, I would appreciate a willingness to try to use them, in the group and privately outside the group. After trying them all, it's certainly up to you which you continue to use, but you will be choosing consciously, from options.

### Verbal Prayer

Traditionally, we have been taught that there are a variety of types of verbal prayer: adoration of God, confession, petition (asking), intercession (asking for someone else), and thanksgiving.

Verbal is used most often in worship services.

When we pray while alone, although we do not speak, we often use words.

Using words may seem that we relate to the divine through our intellect, but we might realize that we do not use images with words and we have emotional tones, etc.

Verbal prayer is often helpful when we have a strong sense of an "other" in prayer. We talk to the "Other." However, we might recall that we can sit with another in silence, and we can "daydream" with a loved other as we make plans together.

When verbal prayer is used in a group, it is often an experience of "gift-giving," hearing what another is concerned about and bringing to God.

Sometimes there is silence, as a group waits for someone to speak. In my opinion, that is fine. We can know that many verbal prayers are being uttered silently in the group. Sometimes there is concern over being just the right words. Perhaps we can minimize that in this group by simply stating at the outset and encouraging throughout the sessions that whatever words are used, whether they be flowery paragraphs or one word ejaculations are fine!

### Imagery Prayer

- I. Jesus made use of imagery when he taught with parables: mustard seeds, growing into large bushes; seeds landing on various turfs; hidden treasures; laborers at work; sibling rivalries; shepherds looking for lost sheep; a woman looking for a lost coin.
- II. Many people use visualization when they are praying for another person or a situation. They "see" that person or event in their "mind's eye," visualizing healing, wholeness, or harmony.
- III. We can visualize ourselves, moving through the day, doing our various tasks, meeting people, all in a receptive attitude towards God's guidance. The Simontons and others have shown the potential healing effects of visualization in cancer research. They encourage patients (along with other treatment) to "see" their tumors shrinking, being carried off as a cloud, being attacked by "soldiers," or whatever type of fantasy seems efficacious to the patient.
- IV. Because "Light" is an abstract quality which refers to insight, warmth, good, enlightenment, etc., and because "light" can be visualized, it is often an easy and valuable adjunct to prayer. Seeing light in a sanctuary, before the service starts; imagining increased light around the dinner table in a stressed family setting; visualizing light around a person whom we love--all these are ways of becoming aware of God's presence around these situations and ways of becoming more receptive to Divine Guidance.
- V. Sometimes you may wish to use a directed imagery prayer.
  - a. St. Ignatius used guided imagery in leading his fellow priests, as well as lay people. He had them envision themselves present in the dramatic moments of Christ's life, interacting with the people and asking for guidance. He encouraged dialogue between the one who prayed and Joseph, the Blessed Mother, and Jesus. The "Spiritual Exercises" have been well used since their completion in 1533.
  - b. Recent interest in the use of "active imagination," following Jung's work, are represented in the works of Dr. Walter Wink, Morton Kelsey, and others, who are concerned that Christians have authentic ways of integrating the active use of imagination into prayer and Bible study.



- VI. Guidelines to help with imagery:
1. Most people have a "sense" of a scene, rather than "seeing" clearly.
  2. Practice with the use of imagination in a directed way does improve one's ability to visualize.
  3. There is no "success" or "failure," for whatever emerges in one's imagination can offer a message, if time is taken for reflection.
  4. Remember the image is simply what emerges today, right now; the images may be entirely different at another time. The message needs to be considered in conjunction with rational thinking, discussion, your faith. (Reason, tradition, Scripture, experience)
  5. Books like The Dream Game by Ann Faraday are helpful in working with images.
- VII. You can choose a concrete Scriptural symbol and simply hold that in mind, observing what passes through your mind.
- VIII. Drawbacks: Some people have resistance or difficulty with this. There is at times the risk of taking one image too seriously, without consulting other guidance and gaining further perspective.

## Gender Free Images of Divinity

Tillich reminds us that a symbol (image) points to the reality which it represents...The symbol itself is not our "god," our "ultimate concern."

Symbols grow out of a community when they are effective in producing the experience of the reality symbolized. Symbols have a life cycle: they are born, mature, and eventually die.

Letty Russell points out that "God language should not be confused with the reality of God, but should struggle to disclose that reality..."

- I. Although "God" is a masculine term, and certainly is when realized in comparison to "Goddess," we have grown so accustomed to speaking of the Divinity by naming "God," that to many it is not "consciously" masculine. Of course, when followed by a pronoun, the masculine word is then underlined. Some choose, then, simply to continue using the word "God." The author of The Word for US, the Gospels of John and Mark...restated in inclusive language, chooses this method. (rationale expl.p.ii)
- II. Biblical symbols which are gender free:
  - Light (John 8:12)
  - Love
  - Truth
  - Comforter
  - Spirit (originally was feminine in both Hebrew and Greek, is often referred to as masculine in later Christian writings)
  - Creator
  - Reconciler
  - Servant (Ex. Chapter 3)
  - Wisdom (feminine in both Hebrew and Greek, now doubtful to bring forth a feminine sense to it for those not knowing derivation)
- III. Hymnal symbols which are gender free:
  - Author of Life Divine
- IV. Other possibilities:
  - Divine Spirit
  - Life-Giver
  - Redeemer/Liberator
  - Eternal One
  - Holy Spirit--note above
  - Being Itself--Tillich

Oh One  
 Oh Holy One  
 Silence--used by Valentinus, prominent Gnostic teacher  
     and poet (though he saw Silence as feminine)  
 Ineffable Source  
 Source of our Being  
 It--(for pronoun) used in Kabbalah, Jewish tradition  
     because Divinity is not able to be described  
 Ground of Being--Tillich  
 Ultimate One--(to emphasize ultimate concern)

- V. Drawbacks: For some people many of these are too abstract to sense the Divinity personally. However, the more they are used, the more they might evoke a personal quality.

Assets: These do not cut anyone off from Divinity or place distance due to gender. Also, they may function to open up reality beyond symbol more.

## Masculine Images of Divinity

Concepts of "The Other"--in many cultures the basic difference between people is seen as that of male and female.

In our culture, the male is very often (or always) considered the "norm," the "person," while the female is considered the "other," in both theory and practice.

1. Freud--personality development explained by growth of little boy, while understanding of little girl greatly distorted by seeing her through comparison to boy rather than identification with mother... further explanations...
2. Jung--speaks of the "anima" and "animus," the masculine and feminine in all persons, but the "conscious" aspect is masculine!
3. Broverman studies show psychotherapists view "healthy male" and "healthy adult" similarly, but the "healthy female" is "unhealthy" viewed against "adult" norms...explanations further...
4. In practice, women have often taken the role of "helper" to the significant person, the male. (Obviously exceptions, but then seen as exceptions to the "rule.")
5. Religion in our culture still sees the male as the "norm" even in defining "sin" and "grace" for example...explain further

Karen Horney in 1930's pointed out that there is fear/distrust between the sexes precisely because of relating to an "other," but that the sexes also need each other, need affiliation (not just with parent, but with equals), and there is a healthy attraction!

### Historical Development of the Male God in Judeo-Christian Tradition

"Unlike many of his contemporaries among the deities of the ancient near East, the God of Israel shared his power with no female divinity, nor was he the divine Husband or Lover of any. He can scarcely be characterized in any but masculine epithets: king, lord, master, judge, and father. Indeed, the absence of feminine symbolism for God marks Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in striking contrast to the world's other religious traditions, whether in Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, and Rome, or in Africa, India, and North America, which abound in feminine symbolism." (Elaine Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels)

Scholars are sharing with us now both the tendency to see the divinity in masculine images in Jud-Xtn trad, and the persistent popular interest in retaining feminine imagery in one form or another from ancient days to present.

Leonard Swidler (Biblical Affirmations of Woman) mentions the masculine images of God as father, jealous husband, warrior, then says, "They are far more pervasive throughout the Bible than feminine imagery of God, reflecting for patriarchal, male-oriented society. But the feminine divine imagery is there, too, albeit in a much lesser degree." p. 21

Swidler points out that ancient Hebrews depicted the divine in feminine and masculine images. Two pressures were exerted: 1. to transcend all sexual descriptions in favor of God as spirit, 2. to suppress the feminine imagery in favor of a totally masculine one. (He calls the first "progress" and the second "dehumanizing.")

Trinitarian terms were used as Christianity developed...The Father and Son have been described in masculine terms and the third, The Spirit, often suggests a sexless, neuter term.

When Jesus introduced the Lord's Prayer and spoke of God as Father, the word was "abba," more like our "Daddy," as a familiar term, perhaps to emphasize the relationship of loving father rather than the images of judge, ruler, lord, but certainly not necessarily to say exclusively to use a father image...

What problems are seen now with an exclusively masculine image of God?

1. As in any form of society, we are unaware of its effects upon us, because we are immersed in it...Must truly work to see how it functions.

2. Patriarchy is a system in which the structure, the institutions, the language, and the religion are dominated by the fathers.

3. Some will say that they really don't think of God as masculine, but "images have a way of surviving in the imagination in such a way that a person can function on two different and even apparently contradictory levels at the same time..."

Mary Daly...this challenging the exclusive masculine image of God may be "the beginning for many of a more authentic search for transcendence; that is, for God."... "An awareness might also emerge--not merely in the minds of a theological elite, but in the general consciousness--that revelation is an on-going experience."

4. Rita Gross, on Judaism--"To speak of God is among the most difficult and audacious things that humans do. To

address God is even more difficult. Yet religious people attempt both as a matter of course..." All the words used in the religious enterprise are, in the long run, analogous and metaphorical..Statements about God cannot be taken literally." "Why, then are masculine imagery and pronouns so universal? Why has this single designation escaped unscathed even in a theological tradition that tries to question all...God language?" "Shouldn't 'He' and all variants of it be as circumscribed as any other positive attribute of God--or more circumscribed, since they are more misleading?"

Rita Gross--"Because they are so automatic, even in highly reflective people, linguistic conventionalities are among the most potent factors in shaping people's perceptions and then limiting them to that socially constructed reality --as if it were inevitably the way things are."

5. Patricia Wilson--"The circular nature of the process of creating God in our image means that eventually we begin to create ourselves in the image we have created of God. Surrounding these images of God and of creation is a life myth, a religious world view."

Although for multitudes of men and women, the masculine imagery for God is still very persuasive and powerful and a source of strength, comfort, and challenge, for a growing number of women (and some men) there is a desire for other options. Some feminists are simply leaving Christianity or Judaism behind. ("The women's movement will present a growing threat to patriarchal religion less by attacking it than by simply leaving it behind."-Daly) These women (and some men) are looking at the ancient Goddess religions and/or their contemporary experience for symbolism which will kindle a vital relationship to the divine. Other women (and men) are maintaining that the overall gospel of Jesus Christ was freedom from oppression, that Jesus himself related to women in radically new ways, and that within the Judeo-Christian tradition there are some (admittedly few) images of divinity which are feminine which can be lifted up today more positively and self-consciously.

## Silence as Prayer

### Type I Silence--"Waiting Silence"

Used by Friends, Quakers

A group "waits" in silence, willing for there to be total silence, but also ready to have a strong urge to speak. If one is guided to speak, one senses that guidance. Sometimes the analogy is made as to a well: the deep springs within oneself are touched, and given encouragement to be shared. At times that which people speak is connected with the prior speaker, but often there is no logical connection, for each person is following his/her inner guidance.

This could be done in a modified version while one is alone, by simply not forcing oneself to think of what to pray for. simply sit in silence, and if something comes to your attention, focus upon that, but be willing to sit for the period of time without any primary focus, if that is what occurs.

### Type II Silence--"Disciplined Silence"

Used by Zen Buddhists, called zazen, sitting.

One seeks to let go of any thought, body sensation, feeling, etc. When something comes to your attention, simply recognize it, then seek to disassociate your attention from it.

This is sometimes used by Christians as preparation for other types of prayer. It is a way of getting all the little persistent concerns out of the way for a while, to become extremely "centered." According to one's theology, then, this centering may be an easing into greater receptivity to the Divinity.

### Type III Silence--"Prayer of the Quiet" by St. Teresa

This is not sought after; it comes upon one while doing something else. It is a great sense of hushed silence.

## Feminine Images of Divinity

### Historical

- 25,000-8,000 BC excavations produce innumerable female statuettes that appear to be either figurines of the Goddess or perhaps at least attempts at sympathetic magic...appears to be no male god at this period.
- Until 2,500 worship of Goddess more vigorous and explicit ...All old world areas show strong evidence of having initially been Goddess worshipping.
- There was a gradual shift from TOTAL dominance of the Goddess to the existence of a male deity along side the goddess, then eventually to the masculine deity as being dominant.
- Hebrews persisted to worship the Goddess, as Yahwists struggled against this. We can see evidence of this in many passages of the O.T. prophets.
- Feminine imagery which did persist in Judaism:
  - Seamstress--Gen 3:20; Mother and nurse--Numbers 11:12; Loving Mother--Hosea 11:1,3,4,9; Giving birth to humanity--Deut 32:18; Womb--; Mistress, Midwife, Mother and Father, Wisdom--not only grammatically feminine, but also depicted as a woman in many places in OT (e.g., Prov 3:13-18, Prov. 8)
  - Spirit (grammatically feminine and depicted that way very often)
  - Law (Torah)
- Post Biblical times--Jewish mysticism in Kabbala spoke of deity as Mother and Father.
- Gospels which were not included in the NT canon:
  - Acts of Thomas--"O Jesus Christ, we glorify and praise thee and thine invisible Father and thy Holy Spirit and the Mother of all creation..."
  - Valentinus, Gnostic teacher, premise God essentially indescribable, but can be imagined as dyad: One is ineffable, depth, primal Father; other is Grace, Silence, Womb, Mother of All
  - E.g., prayer: "May She who is before all things, the incomprehensible and indescribable Grace, fill you within, and increase in you her own knowledge."
  - I and II Timothy, Colossians, Ephesians are retaliations against pressure for more active women and for feminine images of divinity.
- Symbol of Dove, ancient symbol of Goddess of Love, began to represent Holy Spirit.
- Jesus, analogue of God to woman in Parable of Lost Coin.
- Goddess worship finally suppressed by Christian emperors of Rome---about 500 AD
- Veneration of Mary began around 4th century...peaked 12-16th century...she was always Mother of God, never God the Mother.



### Present Discussion

Carol Christ--Why Women Need the Goddess: 1. to affirm female power, not power over, but simply sheer effectiveness and the joyous affirmation of creativity; 2. to affirm the female body and life cycle in a society which still views women as temptress and parts of her body as dirty, and older women as aged rather than wise...view three aspects of goddess as maiden, mother, and crone for youth, maturity, and age...; 2. to value positively the will for women, as women have been trained not to value will (Eve took initiative and that was bad; Mary was submissive and that was good); 4. to affirm that there can be good relationships between women, especially mothers and daughters.

Rita Gross--Jewish Scholar--argues that we do need personal images for divinity within Judaism. She does not believe the Gender Free solution is sufficient. She argues for referring to God as sometimes "he" and sometimes "she." "Let me say immediately that I am quite aware that God is not really either female or male or anything in between...I am talking about the only thing we can talk about...images of God...If it is daring, degrading or alienating to speak of God using female pronouns and imagery, that perhaps indicates something about the way women and the feminine are valued... Therefore, we might say that the ultimate symbol of our degradation is our inability to say 'God She.'"...why is "God She" met with hilarity or hostility?

Again, my hypothesis: we want some identity with aspects of divinity and we want some closeness...can we, if we have options of images for divinity, develop greater experience of the strength, power, will, etc., and closeness, help, caring, acceptance, etc. That is, would women benefit from greater identity with female images of divinity and men benefit from greater closeness to female images, while maintaining the past benefits of the masculine images?

## Action as Prayer

Style 1--"Practicing the presence" a la Brother Lawrence  
 Lawrence was a Lay brother among barefotted Carmelites in Paris in the year 1666. He died at eighty years of age, full of love and years and honored by all who knew him...He endeavored to "walk in His presence."  
 --He came to believe that "our sanctification did not depend upon changing our works, but in doing that for God's sake which we commonly do for our own."  
 --...that "it was a great delusion to think that the times of prayer ought to differ from other times; that we are as strictly obliged to adhere to God by action in the time of action as by prayer in the season of prayer."  
 --"We must know before we can love. In order to know God, we must often think of Him; and when we come to love Him, we shall also think of Him often, for our heart will be with our treasure."  
 --He is known as one who was assigned to the kitchen, and came to prayerful action amidst that task. A prayer attributed to him: "Lord of all pots and pans and things...Make me a saint by getting meals...And washing up the plates!"

Style 2--Social Action, in which what one does is strongly out of conviction that that is one's call from the divine.  
 --Many examples, brainstorm those who come to your mind...  
 --Simone Weil, born in Paris, 1909, died in 1943...  
 "She was a teacher, classical scholar, intellectual par excellence, a French-Jewish genius, political and religious nonconformist, Spanish Civil War participant, Free French movement worker, factory and farm laborer, poet, visionary, mystic, suffering "friend of God," religious thinker and philosopher precariously situated at the "intersection of Christianity and everything that is not Christianity."  
 --"The Gospel contains a conception of human life, not a theology." Earthly things are the criterion of spiritual things...  
 --"Today it is not nearly enough to be a saint, but we must have the saintliness demanded by the present moment, a new saintliness, itself also without precedent."

Style 3--Openness as spiritual discipline: openness to people, ideas, natural processes of body, etc...by John Cobb, Jr.  
 --"My gradual shift to this understanding of the

Action as Prayer  
Style 3--Continued

spiritual life has been a source of reassurance to me, although I am still only beginning to explore its meaning. It leads to a different appraisal of the times when I am forgetful, consciously, of God. For example, when I am deeply involved in talking with someone about that person's problems or about a shared concern, the idea of God is likely to be absent from my consciousness. I once thought it desirable to retain a consciousness of God's presence throughout such a conversation. I no longer think that is important. I now believe that if I am genuinely open to what the other has to say and willing to share myself in that conversation--as opposed to working out a private and self-serving agenda through it--then I am practicing a form of spiritual discipline eminently appropriate to the Christian....It once seemed to me that the moments of greatest happiness--when I was most absorbed in work, for example, were times of God-forgetfulness, and even of pride, for which I needed to repent. I no longer believe that. When imagination and thought are functioning most freely, when they are guided least by private purposes and most by the images and ideas with which they work, then, I believe that I am most harmoniously and appropriately related to God....My work is a spiritual discipline through which I prepare myself to be more effective in the service of God."...

--John Cobb: "I find God in the natural processes of my body, when those are not thwarted and impeded by external interferences. I find God in my feelings, when these are open and spontaneous. I find God in my reason, when this is drawn by truth rather than by the effort to justify myself. I find God in my imagination, when this is free and creative. I find God in my will, when it aims at justice and righteousness. I find God in my spirit, when it orients the whole of my life toward that which is worth achieving and frees me from petty, self-serving concerns."

## GENDER FULL IMAGES OF DIVINITY

1. Elohim, as in Genesis I--God as androgynous  
Elohim is plural, probably coming from the singular feminine form of the word for God, Eloah (ah is a singular feminine suffix; im is a plural suffix that can be feminine or masculine). "There is likely a residue of a very ancient Semitic female God, Eloah, a male God, El, and a court of female and male Gods, Elohim, reflected in this Hebrew biblical usage. This intermixing of masculine and

## Gender Full Images of Divinity, Continued

feminine forms of God by the Biblical writers indicates both a combining of sexual images in God, and a transcending of all sexuality."

--"and God (Elohim) said, 'Let us make a humanity (adam) in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves.'...And God (Elohim) created humanity (ah adam)) in the image of himself, in the image of God (Elohim) he created it, male and female he created them" --Gen 1:26-27.

### 2. Mother and Father

Example is 63:14-15 "Yahweh...where is your ardor and your might, the trembling of your womb and your compassion? Restrain not yourself, for you are our Father."

Example: Job 38:28-29 (in irony) "Has the rain a father? Who begets the dewdrops? What womb brings forth the ice, and gives birth to the frost of heaven?"

Example: Judaism Mysticism in Kabala

Example: Christian Science "Mother-Father" God...

### 3. Gnostic Valentinus two aspects of divinity, as on Feminine Imagery Sheet.

### 4. Trinity seen as: 1. God is Father/Son/and Female Spirit 2. God as Mother-Father/Christ

### 5. Quaternity: (as with Jung)--God the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and Feminine component (but here also as evil, to incorporate both the feminine and the evil element, which Jung believes is not included in the Christian image of divinity, and is badly needed, he believes).

### 6. Simply speak of God as "he" sometimes and "she" sometimes to have gender-full options, but not in the same moment... Rita Gross' argument...

### 7. New analogue for divinity: the male-female relationship (not mother-father) suggested by Patricia Wilson/Iowa-- because: this has the potential for actualizing all the dimensions of human inter-relations. "If the ideal of human interrelation is the transcendence of the limits of self in a conscious way, the male-female interaction can do this in physical, intellectual, and affective dimensions. Other relationships may offer one or another dimension in varying degrees, but no other can offer such a range of possibilities on all levels. The interrelationship of ml and fml, on a one to one basis, offers the most complete intimacy and vulnerability, and thus the most potential for growth, development, mutual support and understanding, precisely because it involves all the dimensions of human life." She prefers to Mother-Father because:

## Gender Full Images of Divinity, Continued

1. It stresses only one role of ml-fml relation;
  2. Seems to imply God-human relationship best seen as represented by parent-child...partly true but not complete;
  3. Ml-fml relationship not just to produce, but a sharing of all dimensions...
8. Jewish Mysticism: Quaternity: Mother, Father, Son, Daughter.

# Repetitious Words/Phrases Used in Prayer

1. The Jesus Prayer--6th Century--used in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai...carried to Mt. Athos in 14th century, where it was very popular...1782 collected writings of experience of praying this prayer and published Philokalia, "love of the beautiful"...mid-20th century brought to Western Christianity...
  - The prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me." (variations)
  - The procedure: Repeat, while involved in other activities, until it becomes a prayer of the "heart" as well as the "lips."
2. Examples in Roman Catholic and Protestant tradition:
  1. Rosary: Apostles' Creed, Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Doxology--all 5 times
    - Hail Mary: Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, Hail Our Life, Our Sweetness, and Our Hope. To Thee do we cry who are (banished down?) here, mourning and weeping, in this valley of tears. Turn then, most Gracious Advocate, thine eye of mercy toward us. And after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb--Jesus. Oh clement, oh loving, o sweet virgin Mary, pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
  2. The Lord's Prayer.
  3. Hymns, Alleluiah!
3. Transcendental Meditation (TM)--teaches a "mantra" (a word, the effects of which are known) to students, which they are expected to recite for 15-20 minutes, both morning and evening. The phrases are from the Hindu texts, though this is seldom advertised. The student is not told the meaning. Due to so many people who have tried this method, there is ample evidence that it does help reduce the body's tension, as seen in blood pressure, etc.
4. Bio-feedback, and stress/relaxation techniques often use a short phrase or word to aid the movement into a relaxed state.
  - Purposes: concentration and greater attention
  - develop a certain quality (such as choosing word to focus upon)
  - for health
  - to be more open/receptive to God/Jesus/Mary
  - aim toward "wholeness"

It would seem that if the purpose were communication, in receptive mode, with God, then it would be called

"prayer."

Types: 1. Meaningful--text (choose text from Christian Scriptures or from another source which brings inspiration)--e.g., the I Am Statements of Jesus in John.

--life (choose phrase from log, dream, meditation, thought, etc., --e.g., "Wise patience, be what you are").

2. Nonsense--word deliberately chosen to avoid mind-wandering...

Timing--varies from 20 min/2 times a day (TM) to 12 minutes mornings (Fellowship of Cont. Prayer) to attempt to repeat all day (Jesus Prayer).

--Dr. Simonton, for health, suggests 3 times a day.

Alone or in group; silently or aloud; breathing (number of views...some to ignore, others to repeat with breathing in and out).

Advantages: simple, commitment, health as well as prayerful...

Difficulties: results take a long time, possible to become preoccupied with this as the method, possible to lose meaning and become routine (if purpose was to have meaning), Morton Kelsey believes this does not allow for the spontaneous production of the "dark" side, as is possible in imagery...

## Mary

Author Warner in prologue remembers being raised Catholic and the influence of Mary upon her..."wearing blue ribbons ...the color of the Virgin...that signified that the wearer was a child of Mary, and had dedicated herself to the Virgin and promised to emulate her in thought, word, and deed: her chastity, her humility, her gentleness. She was the culmination of womanhood. As my agnostic father maintained, it was a good religion for a girl..."

Years later, "The Virgin, sublime model of chastity, nevertheless remained for me the most holy being I could ever contemplate...though my heart rebelled, I held fast to my new intimation that in the very celebration of the perfect human woman, both humanity and women were subtly denigrated."

4 dogmas defined as articles of faith in Roman Catholic Church:

1. divine motherhood
2. virginity--both declared by councils of Early Church
3. immaculate conception, proclaimed 1854, spares her of all stain of original sin
4. assumption, body and soul, into heaven, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII, 1950

Her most evident function TODAY is intercession...mediation is most constant theme of her cult

In Scripture--not mentioned much

earliest ref Gal 4:4, approx. 57 AD--Paul never mentions her again

in Mark--3:31 and 6:3

in John--2 appearances: wedding at Cana and at the foot of the Cross

in Acts--prays with disciples in Jerusalem after Ascension 1:14

Therefore, most knowledge from Christ's infancy in Matt. and Luke

Luke tells of the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Purification (presentation of Christ at the temple), and scene in which Christ is lost at the temple

In Luke, Mary speaks 4 times; in Matt. she is silent...

Virgin--2nd cent. Docetists believed Jesus not really human, but divine...so early Christian theologians stressed his humanity...later greater menace to church was Arianism, which emphasized his humanity too much, theologians thought ...Council of Nicaea in 325 affirmed both humanity and divinity...virgin birth was key...to divinity...

Mother of God--declared 431 Ephesus...huge public joy over this...452 Council of Chalcedon, two natures of Christ formally reasserted, virgin officially given title "ever-virgin"--landmark in cult of Mary as mother of God...

Cult of Virgin grew more smoothly, attentions to miraculous virginity and her divine motherhood...

Accepting Virgin as ideal of purity implicitly demands rejecting the ordinary female condition as impure...



Ascetic strand in Christianity...women became nuns...some independence...didn't help women on the whole...

Mary—Queen of Heaven--through the Assumption (taken up body and soul in to heaven) based on Rev. 12:1...woman clothed with the sun, moon under feet, stars.

--Pope Pius XII officially proclaimed Mary as Queen of Heaven, 1954...

--it seems whenever the church needed to reassert its authority, Mary was emphasized...

**\*\*10th century...**first stirrings of adoration transforming Virgin from distant queen into a gentle, merciful mother, "Our Lady," the inspirer of love and joy, private sweet-heart of monks and sinners...fundamental change...from organized communal chanting of cong. to private prayers made in a spirit of interior contemplation...

Our Lady--12th cent. first given this title...

middle ages managed to transform the Virgin into an image of a human, approachable, supremely adorable woman who stood by humanity like a mother but loved it like a mistress...

consecrated virgins believed themselves brides of Christ ...celibate priests and clerics...imagine themselves grooms of Mary...

St. Francis, early 13th cent....new ethic...brought virgin to become more like a peasant mother with her child...Madonna of Humility

virtue of humility fostered on the female sex in particular... type of virtues decreed feminine: docility, obedience, gentleness, irresolution, humility, cringing, forbearance, long suffering...

"it is this very cult of the Virgin's 'femininity; expressed by her sweetness, submissiveness, and passivity that permits her to survive, a goddess in a patriarchal society..."

The Virgin's Milk--suckling was the one natural function permitted to Mary...in poetry, etc. God becomes a nursing mother...

Virgin weeps--prayed to, for could be depended on for pity and comfort...

Mother of the Church--1964...Second Vatican Council stressed the relationship of Mary and the Church...gave Mary new title...

Mary Magdalene myths...nowhere states her sins were sexual, but assumed...no place in conceptual architecture of Christian society for a single woman who is neither a virgin nor a whore...(i.e. Church affirms regenerate sexuality of Mary Magdalene and chastity of Mary)

Virgin seen as connected with moon, tides...etc., prayed to much for traveling, and at sea...

Mary as Intercessor--hearing people's prayers and presenting them to Jesus...the virgin does not have the power to grant the answer to prayer herself, but only intercedes with her son, ...but the son can refuse his mother nothing...

One of the most ancient Christian prayers, from late 3rd to 8th century "We seek refuge under the protection of your mercies, Oh Mother of God; do not reject our supplication in need but save us from perdition, oh you who alone are blessed."

Rosary--out of hunger for private experience of God, and need to assert legitimacy of Rome against heretics...developed from 1041-1568, more "as is" today...

Ruether discusses Mary, compared to Ancient Goddesses, Mary and Israel, with concept of God's bride...Mary in relation to the feminine symbol of Wisdom, Mary, the Mother of God, and Mary with respect to the femininity of God...She discusses the doctrines of Mary in the church...as New Eve, Perpetual Virgin, God's Mother, giver of Grace and Goodness, ...then discusses Mary for Protestants and for our culture today...

Some say (Jung) Mary represents an archetypal feminine element needed in concept of divinity...Others argue that all that has been placed upon Mary has indeed hurt real women, in terms of models of women...Popular piety certainly shows a need to pray to, and feel close to, a feminine image.

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 G - General prayer  
 Im - Imagery  
 S - Silence  
 Act - Action

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